



ROBERT L. JOHNSON UNVEILS OPSPPLACE.COM THROUGH VIBRANT PITTSBURGH ALLIANCE TO HIGHLIGHT REGIONAL EMPLOYERS AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE TALENT

Vibrant Pittsburgh and Leading Regional Employers to Connect Minority Job Seekers and Business Owners with Career and Procurement Opportunities at Area Companies through OppsPlace.com

PITTSBURGH, PA – March 28, 2012 – Robert L. Johnson, chairman of The RLJ Companies and founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET) today announced that Vibrant Pittsburgh and regional employers have joined OppsPlace.com to create a more diverse workforce in the Pittsburgh region and to enhance jobs and vendor supplier opportunities for individuals and businesses. OppsPlace is a diverse online network that will provide minority job seekers and minority business owners with the best opportunities for success in online job searches, networking, and procurement opportunities.

“We are excited about the OppsPlace and Vibrant Pittsburgh collaboration,” said Johnson. “I created OppsPlace for several reasons first to reduce the disparity in unemployment for minority Americans and to increase access for vendor services and supplier contracts for minority businesses; and second to provide corporate America with a targeted destination to identify and interact with minorities for employment and business opportunities. With Vibrant Pittsburgh’s leadership in bringing together area businesses to create opportunities for minority professionals and business owners in Pittsburgh and the surrounding region, we will drive economic gains within minority communities,” he concluded.

“The Pittsburgh region’s above average economic performance and the thousands of available jobs across a spectrum of industries position it as a place of opportunity for natives and newcomers,” said Melanie Harrington, CEO of Vibrant Pittsburgh. “Yet a critical challenge remains, minority job seekers and businesses aren’t immediately connecting with the opportunities here. One of our goals is to position Pittsburgh as a place to live, work and thrive.”

OppsPlace will address the challenges of unemployment and creating business opportunities by providing a dedicated online network for helping qualified diverse job seekers and business owners engage directly with key decision makers at the region’s businesses. Additionally, OppsPlace gives the region’s corporations a vehicle to promote, recruit and attract multicultural professionals and minority businesses.

For many years, Johnson has been focused on creating opportunities for minorities and recently announced the RLJ Rule for public and private sector businesses. The RLJ Rule is an adaptation of the National Football League’s (NFL) Rooney Rule, named after Art Rooney, owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers and chair of the NFL’s diversity committee, which requires the 32 teams, to interview at least one qualified minority candidate whenever a head coaching or general manager position become available. The RLJ Rule is designed to encourage companies to voluntarily establish a "best practices" policy of diversity and inclusion by identifying and interviewing minority candidates or vendors that are often overlooked under traditional hiring or procurement practices. OppsPlace and the RLJ Rule are two solutions where Johnson believes businesses both large and small can take direct action to increase employment and business opportunities for minority Americans.

“With the Pittsburgh region’s great transformation, organizations are in a position to grow the diversity of the workforce by connecting minorities to our wide ranging opportunities, whether they’re in manufacturing, energy, banking or football,” stated Art Rooney, II, President of the Pittsburgh Steelers. “I hope there comes a time when we no longer need it, but I’m not sure we’re there yet. Certainly, a lot of progress has been made and the Rooney Rule is working for the NFL. I think it can work in other industries as well,” he concluded.

To date, nearly 40 national companies have joined OppsPlace. Companies in the Pittsburgh region that have joined Vibrant Pittsburgh as charter members of OppsPlace include BNY Mellon, Education Management Corporation (EDMC), FedEx Ground, Giant Eagle, Highmark, The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., PPG Industries, Inc., UPMC, and United States Steel Corporation. These regional companies are committed to taking direct action to increase employment and business opportunities for the minority community.

“Today, new jobs are being created, national demographics are changing and the demand for diverse, highly educated and skilled employees is increasing in the region,” added Harrington.

Mark Minnaugh, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer at Giant Eagle stated, “Giant Eagle is a full service, multi format food and fuel retailer with more than 35,000 team members in stores, corporate offices and retail support centers across four states. Our success depends on effectively attracting, promoting and retaining team members at all levels who can relate to our diverse customers. It’s both strategic and common sense for us to make certain that team members reflect the diversity of our marketplace.”

In addition to the regional launch of OppsPlace, Vibrant Pittsburgh continues to build a regional “network of inclusion” among employers, diverse employees, their families and the diverse community groups in the region. Efforts include staffing a Welcome Center for newcomers and offering an expanded partner program and a New Arrivals Bridge Program.

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Automatic Data Processing, Inc.	HBO	Siemens Corporation
Aflac	Highmark	State Farm®
Avery Dennison	KB Home	State Street
BNY Mellon	Kimberly-Clark	Strayer Education, Inc.
Capital One Financial Corporation	Lowe's	Textron
Colgate-Palmolive Company	McDonald’s®	Toyota
CSX	New York Life	Travelers
Dell	Northern Trust	United States Steel Corporation
Education Management Corporation (EDMC)	Penn Mutual	UPMC
EMC	The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.	Vibrant Pittsburgh (VP)
FedEx Corporation	PPG Industries, Inc.	Visa
General Motors	Prudential Financial, Inc.	YUM! Brands
Giant Eagle		

Bob Johnson/OppsPlace/Vibrant Pittsburgh

Page Three

March 28, 2012

About The RLJ Companies: The RLJ Companies, founded by Robert L. Johnson, is an innovative business network that provides strategic investments in a diverse portfolio of companies. The RLJ Companies seeks to target undiscovered or underserved markets then exercise solid management to achieve results. Within The RLJ Companies portfolio, Johnson owns or holds majority interests in businesses operating in banking, private equity, real estate, hospitality, automobile dealerships, entertainment, and video lottery terminal (VLT) gaming. The RLJ Companies is headquartered in Bethesda, MD, with affiliate operations in Charlotte, NC; Orlando, FL; Little Rock, AR; Los Angeles, CA; San Juan, PR; and Monrovia, Liberia. Prior to founding The RLJ Companies, Johnson was founder and chairman of Black Entertainment Television (BET). For more information visit www.rljcompanies.com. Media inquiries: Traci Otey Blunt 240.744.7858 or press@rljcompanies.com

About OppsPlace: OppsPlace, LLC created by Robert L. Johnson, founder and chairman of The RLJ Companies and Ariel Friedler, CEO of Symplicity Corporation, is the preeminent online network for minorities looking to build net worth. It is the only online community that aggregates rich content, minorities looking for jobs and minority businesses seeking to do business with U.S. corporations – all in a robust networking environment. OppsPlace provides U.S. companies with the best opportunity to find qualified, minority job seekers and minority businesses in one online destination. For more information visit www.oppsplace.com. Media Inquiries: Traci Otey Blunt 240.744.7858 or press@rljcompanies.com

About Vibrant Pittsburgh: Vibrant Pittsburgh is committed to matching burgeoning regional opportunities with diverse talent from or region and around the world. Our goal is to attract, retain, welcome and elevate people of color and women, in the hopes of creating a more diverse talent pool for greater economic growth and cultural vitality. For Vibrant Pittsburgh media inquiries contact: Yvonne English Roebuck at yvonne@vibrantpittsburgh.org or 412.915.1174.

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