



November 21, 2005

## **RESPECT of Florida Hosts Town Hall Meeting in Jacksonville to Bring Attention to High Unemployment Rate**

For Immediate Release

Tallahassee, FL (November 21, 2005) – On November 17th, RESPECT of Florida convened a town hall meeting in Jacksonville, Florida to bring attention to providing job opportunities to persons with disabilities throughout northeastern Florida. The event was held in collaboration with The Arc of Jacksonville and numerous local dignitaries also attended; other community agencies who participated in the event were: Pine Castle, Inc., Cerebral Palsy of Northeast Florida, Inc., Goodwill North Florida, ARC/Nassau County, Inc., Angel Wood, Inc., and Eidetik-Amelia Island Care Center.

"We're pleased with the strong showing of legislators who were represented during the town hall meeting," said Brandon M. Macsata, consultant to RESPECT of Florida and facilitator of the meeting. "Lawmakers need to understand the important role RESPECT plays in providing meaningful employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities."

RESPECT of Florida is the state's largest employer of persons with disabilities, providing jobs to nearly 1,700 Floridians.

The five districts represented were Representative Audrey Gibson (District 15), Teri Hines, district secretary for Rep. Mark Mahon's office (District 16), Rebecca Stagg, legislative assistant for Senator James E. "Jim" King's office (District 8), Sandy Matthews, legislative assistant for Rep. Aaron P. Bean's office (District 12), and Matthew Holliday, legislative assistant for Rep. Stan Jordan's office (District 17). Also in attendance was Sheri Goodwin representing the Jacksonville Mayor's Disability Council, and Terry Mothershed representing the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

The Florida Legislature established the RESPECT program in 1974 to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The mission of RESPECT is to facilitate the placement of people with disabilities in competitive employment, using all methods of employment and training to achieve that end. Community, non-profit employment centers are certified to participate in the program, which generates over 1,700 meaningful employment opportunities throughout Florida annually. Due to the enormous success of the program, RESPECT of Florida has garnered national attention as a leader in the state use industry.

For additional information, please contact Terry R. Farmer at (850) 877-4816 or Brandon Macsata at (305) 519-4256.

#####