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Mary Melissa Evans of Georgia Power Company Is Georgia's Women in Business Champion of the Year *--She Established Supplier Diversity Mentoring Program--*

Mary Melissa Evans, Senior Supplier Development Consultant with Georgia Power Company, has been selected the 2008 Women in Business Champion of the Year in Georgia by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Ms. Evans will receive her statewide award from Terri Denison, SBA Georgia District Director, at an Atlanta luncheon on May 22 that is hosted by the Georgia Lenders Quality Circle. She was nominated for the award by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Georgia State University.

The award to Evans recognizes her commitment to the advancement of women's business ownership. Nominees may or may not be small business owners.

"Melissa is a leader in the Georgia Power Company's supplier diversity program through her work as a supplier development consultant," said Bernard Meineke, Director of the SBDC at Georgia State. "The goal of her company's diversity effort is to expand the amount of business it does with a diverse supplier base including Women Business Enterprises (WBE) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE)."

At Georgia Power, Evans is a point of contact for WBEs and MBEs who want to be considered as vendors for the utility company. In 2006, Georgia Power exceeded its diversity spending goal with estimated purchases of \$240.5 million going to certified WBE and MBE firms. The company reports that approximately 65 percent of this amount was with WBE firms.

Evans joined Georgia Power over 20 years ago as a procurement buyer for the company's Fossil & Hydro generating plants as well as its Nuclear Operations unit. During her time at this position, she was recognized for her outstanding record for purchasing from minority-owned



At right is Terri Denison, SBA Georgia District Director, who presented the award to Mary Evans.

companies. Evans was appointed Supplier Diversity coordinator in 1996 for Georgia Power and other Southern Company affiliates.

Evans has led her company's diversification efforts through mentoring and education. She selects companies to receive Georgia Power-funded scholarships for the executive education program at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. She also led Georgia Power's involvement in the Governor's Mentor-Protégé Program and Georgia Power's internal mentoring program.

Evans has been a key champion in Georgia Power's extensive support for the "FastTrac" training program for WBEs and MBEs. This program is delivered by the Georgia Small Business Development Center network. Since 2002, Georgia Power has hosted 10 "FastTrac" classes in their corporate conference center as well as other meetings to promote the program and honor past graduates.

In addition to her full time job, Evans is an active member of the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council (GMSDC) and the Georgia Women's Business Council (GWBC). Her leadership in the GWBC has earned numerous awards including the 2007 GWBC LACE Award for "Advocate of the Year."

Evans also played a key role in the first "Axis Savannah" Conference, a recent event held to introduce WBE and MBE firms in the coastal area to resources and additional access to contracting opportunities.

Evans' background of interacting with minorities can be traced to her upbringing in the border town of El Paso, Texas, and its multi-cultural environment. She polished her customer skills working for the Internal Revenue Service and the City of Smyrna before joining Georgia Power.

Evans has been a volunteer most of her life. When her children were growing up, she served as President of Smyrna Girls Softball and President of the Women's Auxiliary of the Smyrna Athletic Association. She currently is active in her church and homeowners association.