

For Immediate Release

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Artist with disability designs award honoring perseverance in overcoming life challenges

Kansas City, Mo. (May 11, 2009) – The award that Assurant Employee Benefits will present to its seventh annual Shining Star of Perseverance award recipient this week was created by an artist who knows first hand the challenges of disability.

Trained as a research scientist, Jerry Hymel's career as a college instructor was cut short when a tree he was trimming fell on him, causing a spinal cord injury. Following a long hospitalization, Hymel returned to the classroom but quickly determined his condition required a change in lifestyle. Soon after, he began to pursue a hobby in stained glass, which developed into a cottage industry and the formation of his business, Our Glass Studio, based in Hammond, La.

Staff members at the The Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City, with whom Assurant Employee Benefits has established a partnership to assist individuals with disabilities, encouraged several artists with disabilities to submit designs for consideration as the 2009 Shining Star of Perseverance award trophy. Hymel's three-dimensional leaded glass star resting on a leaded glass base was selected as this year's award. It will be presented to Gilbert Tuhabonye of Austin, Texas, who overcame the effects of unimaginable violence and severe physical injury to lead a successful life and inspire others. Going forward, each year's award design will be unique and created by another artist who has experienced disability.

About Assurant Employee Benefits

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