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**Contact:**

Amy Richards  
Charleston|Orwig, Inc.  
Office: (262) 563-5100  
Mobile: (712) 527-2011  
arichards@charlestonorwig.com

**Achievements of Sioux Falls High School Students  
Earn Award from S.D. Department of Education  
*Smithfield Foods' Learners to Leaders™ Program  
Helps Area Youth Set Their Sights Beyond High School***

PIERRE, S.D. (July 29, 2008)—A community educational partnership formed by Smithfield Foods, Inc., its independent operating company John Morrell & Co., the Sioux Falls School District (SFSD) and the Southeast Technical Institute (STI) was honored yesterday by the state for its efforts in helping area high school students advance their education beyond high school.

The South Dakota Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE), a division of the state's Department of Education, presented its State Director's Award to the Smithfield Foods Learners to Leaders™ program in recognition of the program's success in increasing achievement and involvement among Sioux Falls high school students seeking post-secondary education.

The State Director's Award, which was presented to Learners to Leaders representatives during OCTE's annual conference yesterday in Pierre, evaluates a program's ability to increase student achievement and involvement, how it addresses the

needs of nontraditional students and how it meets the needs of special student populations.

“We’re very proud of our partners at SFSD and STI, who worked so hard to help us create the first Learners to Leaders program in the country and set an example for others to follow,” said C. Larry Pope, president and chief executive officer at Smithfield Foods. “And we’re very happy for the students, who have clearly demonstrated their eagerness and determination to fulfill their potential through a post-secondary education.”

Pope pointed out, “The goal of our Learners to Leaders program is to help reinforce what we believe is the most critical part of any community’s foundation—the education of its residents—and we’re delighted to see that happening in Sioux Falls.”

Smithfield Foods is funding the first year of STI’s Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree program in business administration for the students selected by SFSD for the program. Students attend four Sioux Falls high schools: Lincoln, Washington, Roosevelt and Joe Foss.

Students began the program during their junior year and enrolled in STI classes at their high schools which count toward their high school diplomas and their AAS degrees. Upon graduation, the students will continue toward their AAS degrees at the STI campus. Twenty-four additional students have been selected for the program during the 2008-09 school year.

“This award reinforces what students are telling us—that Learners to Leaders works,” said Dr. Pam Homan, SFSD superintendent.

“The program includes students who didn’t think they would be going on to college, but after experiencing what Learners to Leaders has to offer they are energized and determined to continue their education,” Homan said. “Learners to Leaders has given them the opportunity they needed.”

Ken Baptist, vice president and general manager of the John Morrell facility in Sioux Falls, said, “Our company has been a part of Sioux Falls for a long time, and our employees are excited to be involved in an effort that will help secure the economic vitality of our community’s future. We’re proud that our company and our Sioux Falls partners are helping young people build a solid foundation for their future success. And,

in turn, their success will only make our community a better place—a better place to live, raise a family, work and do business.”

Learners to Leaders is a national educational alliance funded by the Smithfield-Luter Foundation and made up of Smithfield Food’s independent operating companies and local educational partners. The alliance believes that education is a key ingredient in strengthening communities and helping shape tomorrow’s leaders. Learners to Leaders provides a helping hand that allows residents to overcome challenges to advancing their education, whether those challenges are academic, social or economic.

The first Smithfield Foods Learners to Leaders program was launched in Sioux Falls in 2006 and similar programs are now underway in Hampton Roads, Va., Lumberton, N.C., Denison, Iowa, Green Bay, Wis., and Milan and St. Joseph, Mo.

Smithfield Foods is a global food company with operations in 13 countries through wholly owned subsidiaries and joint ventures. Headquartered in Smithfield, Va., the company produces more than 50 brands of pork, beef and turkey products and more than 200 gourmet foods. Employing more than 57,000 people across the globe, Smithfield Foods is the world’s largest producer and processor of pork and a leader in turkey processing, cattle feeding and beef processing.

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