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**MERCEDES LAPORTA WINS PRESTIGIOUS
WOMEN'S BUSINESS AWARD**
Successful businesswoman receives national recognition

MIAMI, FL – March 23, 2005 –Mercedes LaPorta, president of Mercedes Electric Supply, Inc., today received the prestigious Salute to Women's Business Enterprises award from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) in Washington, D.C.

The WBENC is the nation's largest and most widely recognized third-party certifier of women-owned businesses. LaPorta is one of 14 Women-owned Business Stars honored this year, representing one of the 14 partner organizations delineated in the WBENC's composition. The "Business Stars" are selected based on their leadership in the local community, their unique ability to inspire other women business owners, and their success in directing a WBENC-certified business.

The award comes as no surprise to those who know her, though Ms. LaPorta is thrilled and humbled to be honored. "I am so grateful to receive the Business Stars award from the WBENC," said Mercedes LaPorta, "especially since the organization has already given me so much by enabling me to meet like-minded businesswomen around the region and successful individuals at Fortune 500 corporations."

LaPorta is currently celebrating 26 years in business, having grown from a small Sylvania lamp distributor to a 43-employee, full-service electrical supply company housed in a 30,000 square foot office building and warehouse. Mercedes Electric Supply boasts a diverse project roster that includes work at the Miami American Airlines Arena, Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada and the Federal Law Enforcement Building that has helped her earn over \$20 million in annual sales. Their contracts with the Miami International Airport have accounted for \$10-20 million in revenue during the last four years. Since joining the WBENC in 2004 she has already received multiple orders for electrical supplies for Office Depot stores nationwide.

Mercedes LaPorta's business accomplishments include multi-year recognition as one of the top Hispanic-owned businesses in the nation and in Florida. Professionally, she is a member of WBENC, WPO and NMSDC. Her industry affiliations include the IMARK Group, National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED), National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), and the Association of Building Contractors (ABC). Locally, she is a member of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.

About Mercedes Electric Supply

Mercedes Electric Supply is family-owned business started in 1979. As an electrical distributor, the company stocks \$2 million worth of inventory from manufacturers such as Square D Company, Pass and Seymour, Osram/Sylvania and Southern Wire. The company is also certified as a Woman-Owned Business and Hispanic Business Enterprise under various state and county agencies.

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