

L'Oreal Awards "Women of Worth" at CNN Summit, By Michelle Edgar

L'Oreal Paris announced the seven "Women of Worth" winners on Tuesday at the CNN "Inspire Summit." The annual event brings together influential women from around the world to discuss how women can make a difference on a local and national level.

"This is a new beginning for L'Oréal. We're introducing a new concept. It's about how women empower each other when they combine forces and can solve some of the most challenging problems," said Carol Hamilton, president of L'Oréal Paris, a division of L'Oréal USA. "We want to extend and deepen the meaning of our words and bring it to life in the real world by honoring real heroes and creating a women-to-women community where they can build off of each others' accomplishments."

The discussions were moderated by CNN correspondent Zain Verjee and featured speakers were San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris, former political filmmaker Ayaan Hirsi Ali ("Submission") and first lady of Rwanda Jeannette Kagame. Hamilton then recognized L'Oréal Paris' honorees.

L'Oréal Paris' "Women of Worth" campaign is a new grassroots award program bringing to life the company's "Because You're Worth It" campaign by acknowledging and honoring women across the U.S. who are making a difference in their communities. For more than 30 years, L'Oréal Paris has been supporting women's empowerment and health, demonstrated through partnerships with nonprofit organizations such as the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund. Launched this year, the program recognizes the achievements of women who are committed to making a difference in the lives of others.

Since the kickoff of the program last January, more than 1,600 women were nominated by peers for their community activism. The nominees were judged on how well their project addressed a specific community need, the impact the organization has had on the local level and the project's creativity and innovation. The winners range in age from 25 to 74 and represent diverse causes, from fighting hunger to autism. The seven honorees, each from a different region of the U.S., include Paula Beville of Second Wind Dreams, Maria Bye of Alicia Rose Victorious Foundation, Laura Disteheim of Neighbor to Neighbor, Erika Ebbel of the WhizKids Foundation, Denise Resnik of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center, Sarah Reynolds of the Loudon County Habitat for Humanity, and Shawnee Isaac Smith of the Heart Touch Project. Each honoree received a donation of \$5,000 for her cause. L'Oréal Paris will also match the donation in each woman's name to the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund.

L'Oréal Paris plans to expand the program in the future by recognizing more women. Next year, the company is nearly doubling the number of honorees, to 13 women, next spring. The announcement of the winners will be made later in the year.

"We plan on building this so there's a representative in every state in America," said Hamilton.

10.13.2006 WWD