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Request for Coverage

SARAH VAN AKEN AWARDED 'YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF 2012'

**AT THE 29th ANNUAL GREATER PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE SMALL BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

PHILADELPHIA, PA—Sarah Van Aken, founder and CEO of **SA VA** and **S.V.A. Holdings Corporation**, a vertically integrated private label apparel business based in Philadelphia, has just been named 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year' by the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. The award, which will officially be given out on **[Thursday, November 17th, 2011](#)** at the **Loew's Hotel in Philadelphia** is in recognition of Ms. Van Aken's passion and commitment to creating the most socially sustainable apparel company in the country.

S.V.A. Holdings Corporation is comprised of four private apparel brands; **Van Aken custom shirts**, **Van Aken Signature** custom hospitality uniforms, **VA Private Label** garment manufacturing services and **SA VA** women's ready-to-wear. Each of the companies' brands integrates high-design aesthetic and quality construction with socially responsible business practices and community building through local job creation, sustainable and recycled raw materials, community partnerships and garments produced in Van Aken's Philadelphia Garment Center.

Creative companies like SA VA are what make Philadelphia a smart city and a smart choice for small business," said **Mayor Michael A. Nutter**. "I would like to congratulate Sarah for being honored as Young Entrepreneur of the Year. To make Philadelphia the nation's greenest city, we need more companies, like SA VA, to be environmentally conscious and to promote successful sustainable businesses."

Van Aken was chosen out of hundreds of applicants and nominated to receive the award by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, whom she received expansion capital from in June of 2009 in order to open a Philadelphia garment factory and launch the company's women's retail apparel brand SA VA. The company committed to creating 20 full time local living wage jobs and has already reached 14 of those within the first two years.

"I am thrilled to be recognized alongside such incredible companies. It is my sincere pleasure to be honored as an entrepreneur who is contributing to and expanding what Philadelphia is and what it means to be a Philadelphian," says Van Aken.

With the focus of the innovative business model mirroring the Slow Food Movement in its "Think Local First" approach, the company designs, develops and manufactures all of its garments in its own Philadelphia garment factory. "With our vertical business model, owning our own factory we can create **local living wage manufacturing jobs**, provide access to health insurance for employees and reduce our **carbon footprint** in half from our previous business model" says Van Aken. Other benefits include low waste design and production. The company sources as many textiles domestically as available and ensures that the rest are fair-trade and if possible, sustainable, organic or recycled. The company's commitment to sustainability goes beyond sensible sourcing and can be seen in the SA VA retail store located at 1700 Sansom Street in Philadelphia, where you will find recycled paper hangers, compostable shopping tags, reclaimed fixtures and reusable shopping bags. In 2010 **S.V.A. Holdings Corporation** became a Certified B Corporation, aligning itself with companies possessing true social missions rather than good green marketing plans.

The company is continuing to grow through a recently launched online store for SA VA at www.savafashion.com and a wholesale line launching for the brand in spring 2012. The expansion should create several more jobs at S.V.A. Holdings Corporation over the coming year and further strengthen the company's mission. "We believe in the craft of the industry where the people who make clothing and accessories are artisans, restoring these jobs to a noble profession. I see a vision of the industry where there is a global network of local, sustainable apparel economies and where the culture of a community defines what process of the supply chain that community excels at and supplies to the world."

Sarah Van Aken resides in Philadelphia. She holds a bachelors degree in Fine Arts from the University of Delaware and has a background in garment sourcing and production in New York City. She is currently a Designer Critic Board Member for Kent State University and Virginia Commonwealth University as well as a Board Member for the Philadelphia Fashion Incubator. Ms. Van Aken has recently been awarded the 'Community Impact Award' from the Women's Opportunity Resource Center.

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