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MERCK & Co., Inc., EARNS WEB ACCESSIBILITY CERTIFICATION FROM THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

First Pharmaceutical Company to Obtain Non-Visual Certification of Web Site

BALTIMORE (April 18, 2005) - The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the largest consumer organization of blind people in the United States, has awarded its NVA (non-visual accessibility) certification to the Merck & Co., Inc., Web site, Merck.com. Merck is the first U.S. pharmaceutical company to earn NFB-NVA certification, which signifies that a Web site is as accessible to blind people as to the sighted.

“Many blind people are computer savvy and want to use the Internet to improve their personal and professional lives,” said Marc Maurer, President of the NFB. “Doing what needs to be done to make a Web site accessible is not only good business, but a step forward on the road to total equality for blind people in the United States.”

People who are blind navigate the Internet by using screen reading software that converts the text on a Web page to synthetic speech or Braille. If a Web site is not set up with accessibility in mind, it can be difficult and frustrating for a blind person to find the information they are looking

for and often impossible for them to complete forms, make purchases, or navigate tables such as bus and train schedules. Simple changes in how certain Web site features are written and coded are often all that are needed to make a site accessible to the blind or people with other disabilities.

On Merck.com, people who are blind or have other types of disabilities now can access information on Merck medicines; patient assistance programs through which eligible patients can receive free and discounted Merck medicines; Merck press releases on product, research & development, corporate and financial news; and feature articles on a variety of health-related topics. In the near future, information on careers also will be accessible.

"As a research-based pharmaceutical company, one of Merck's core values is access. Whether it's helping to provide access to our medicines or to health information on Merck.com, it is an important part of who we are and what we do," said Deborah Dagit, Executive Director of Diversity & Work Environment, Merck & Co. Inc. "We are proud to be the first pharmaceutical company in the United States to achieve the National Federation of the Blind stamp of approval for our Web site. Now all visitors can access information on our business, research and medicines."

Working with members of the technology community, the National Federation of the Blind has developed a rigorous procedure by which Web sites and applications that have made special efforts to be accessible to the blind can be identified and recognized. Merck & Co., Inc., worked with one of the NFB's technology partners, Deque, Inc., to make its Web site fully accessible.

"Deque is honored to have worked with Merck to help them achieve web accessibility as a key priority. Their organizational commitment clearly indicates they see this as a business reality, not a passing trend. When done right, accessibility, can not only increase the usability and maintainability of a web site, but can send a clear message that equality matters to an organization and they are willing to act on it." Said Preety Kumar, CEO of Deque. "Deque's three year partnership with National Federation of the Blind (NFB) ensures a seamless web accessibility certification for our customers," she added.

National Federation of the Blind

With more than 50,000 members, the National Federation of the Blind is the largest and most influential membership organization of blind people in the United States. The NFB improves blind people's lives through advocacy, education, research, technology, and programs encouraging independence and self-confidence. It is the leading force in the blindness field today and the voice of the nation's blind. In January 2004, the NFB opened the NFB Jernigan Institute, the first research and training center in the United States for the blind led by the blind.

About Merck

Merck & Co., Inc. is a global research-driven pharmaceutical company dedicated to putting patients first. Established in 1891, Merck discovers, develops, manufactures and markets vaccines and medicines in more than 20 therapeutic categories. The company also devotes extensive efforts to increase access to medicines through far-reaching programs that not only donate Merck medicines but helps deliver them to the people who need them. Merck also publishes unbiased health information as a not-for-profit service. For more information, visit www.merck.com.

About Deque

Deque is a pioneer in making information accessible to all web users, regardless of personal ability. The company leads the market with solutions that automatically test, validate and repair web sites for accessibility. Deque is the premier provider of end-to-end software and consulting services that speed the ability of major commercial and government customers to embrace the global community of persons with disabilities. For more information, visit www.deque.com.

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