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## News Release

19 March 2014

### GLOBAL ENTERPRISING WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR SA BUSINESSWOMAN

"Women in South Africa need work - but more so than ever, work also needs women." This is the opinion of Gail Downing, managing director of Acorn Group Holdings, who was recently honoured by American magazine and global businesswomens' networking organisation Enterprising Women.

Gail goes on to mention that based on the SA Department of Education's 2013 NSC Technical Report, it's encouraging to note all provinces reflected an enrolment of 10% more female than male candidates. "More girls obtaining a better education is essential for building our economy" she says, "because ultimately it means more women will find their way into mainstream business careers - hopefully also becoming entrepreneurs, business owners and leaders, contributing equally to building the nation in ways that are still seen as very much a male-dominated role."

She qualifies this comment by explaining that worldwide, all countries need more women involved in growing their economies, citing the example that in Britain, if women were to participate in business at the same rate as men, the economy would grow by 10% virtually overnight. In other words, if women were engaged in starting up businesses at the same rate as men, there would be an extra one million female entrepreneurs.

Gail started her own business, Acorn Products, in 1996. Acorn soon acquired brands such as Tabard insect repellents and Teepol detergents, while growing from strength to strength as an organisation dedicated to hard work, sound marketing capabilities and a strong commitment to taking good care of its employees. The transition to a group of companies came about over time, as Acorn added a pharmaceutical plant, laboratory and other specialised business units to its portfolio of services and products.

One of three South African businesswomen selected from its global membership, Gail was a winner in one of several categories at the international 2014 Enterprising Women of the Year Awards. This annual celebration honors outstanding women entrepreneurs who have demonstrated that they own and manage fast-growth businesses; mentor and give back to help other women business-owners; and are leaders in their communities. It also provides networking opportunities for women thought-leaders, established businesswomen and emerging women entrepreneurs from the United States and around the world.

As a founding member of the South African Women Entrepreneurs Network (SAWEN) Gail also maintains a special place in her life for the advancement of women in the local economy. She currently serves as Chairperson of the SAWEN board, while keeping a steady hand on the helm as managing director of Acorn Group, which continues to grow and consolidate its role as a successful and independent owner of several leading brands in the South African consumer market.

(441 Words)

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