Whirlpool Corporation's Charles Jones Wins Fast Company Design Award; Cited as 'Impact Player' in Bringing Smart Design to Market

BENTON HARBOR, Mich., May 19 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Charles Jones, Whirlpool Corporation's vice president for global consumer design, has been named by Fast Company magazine as its 2005 "Impact Player," as well as one of five "Masters of Design" for guiding the company in "cultivating a distinctive branded look and feel that better differentiates its product lineup" from the competition.

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20040202/DETU004LOGO)

Jones was presented the award on May 17 at Fast Company's "The 2005 Masters of Design" celebration at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. The magazine dedicated its June issue to the subject of design, highlighting five of the most influential business designers.

The profile of Jones in the June issue, titled "Whirlpool Finds Its Cool," outlines Whirlpool's brand design and innovation strategy since 1999 and describes the importance of design in bringing innovative, distinctive branded products to market. The Whirlpool brand Duet front-loading washer-dryer pair and the KitchenAid brand briva in-sink dishwasher were cited in the profile as examples of functional, innovative and brand-centric design.

The report, however, notes that design is only "part of a much broader transformation" initiated in the late 1990s by David R. Whitwam, Whirlpool's former chairman and chief executive officer, who was succeeded last year by Jeff M. Fettig. Concerned at the time by a lack of consumer loyalty to appliance brands and purchase decisions based largely on price alone, Whitwam and his senior management team sought to nurture a creative culture at Whirlpool.

Today, all of Whirlpool's 68,000 employees globally have an opportunity to propose innovative ideas or participate on innovation teams. In place are "innovation mentors, an idea pipeline and internal investments to accelerate the best prospects" to market, Fast Company noted, adding that Whitwam "understood that innovation and design go hand in hand."

"Beyond being a richly deserved award for Chuck, the Fast Company recognition also acknowledges that Whirlpool's global brand, customer and innovation strategies are changing the dynamics of the home appliance industry," said Michael D. Thieneman, Whirlpool's executive vice president and chief technology officer.

Jones, who joined Whirlpool in 1995 after leading product planning, business strategy and development organizations for Herman Miller and Xerox Corporation, said, "I'm grateful to the editors and writers at Fast Company for highlighting the importance of design in today's intensely competitive business world. But most of all, I'm indebted to Whirlpool Corporation for giving our Global Consumer Design team a seat at the table, viewing design as a critical core competency and embracing the significance of design among our strategies to retain our leadership position in the industry."

Whirlpool Corporation (NYSE: WHR) is the world's leading manufacturer and marketer of major home appliances, with annual sales of over $13 billion, 68,000 employees, and nearly 50 manufacturing and technology research centers around the globe. The company markets *Whirlpool, KitchenAid, Brastemp, Bauknecht, Consul* and other major brand names to consumers in more than 170 countries. Additional information about the company can be found on the Internet at http://www.whirlpoolcorp.com.