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IFA Educational Foundation Chairman Kenneth Walker, CFE, CEO of Driven Brands, Inc. has announced the first recipients of a new business start-up grant program sponsored by the foundation and the PepsiCo Foundation. The four recipients are U.S. military veterans who were awarded franchises through the IFA's Veterans Transition Franchise Initiative, or "VetFran" program. Each recipient will receive a \$10,000 grant which can be used for business development, education, training, and/or technical assistance.

The VetFran Business Grant Fund recipients include: Rolly Pollies franchisees Jason and Marka Dethier of Austin, Texas. Both served as USAF captains.

Recipient Adia Paden of Vanguard Cleaning System in Newport News, Va., served in the U.S. Army, including a tour of duty in Iraq from 2003 to 2004.

Matthew and Krista Selph of Bearclaw Coffee Company in Radcliff, Ky. both completed tours of duty in Iraq. Matthew, who has also served in Afghanistan and Kosovo, has completed 16 years of active duty service in the U.S. Army and his wife, Krista will be ending her Army Reserve service in 2010.

Dean and Allison Thomas of Paciugo Italian Gelato & Caffè in Seminole, Fla., were also named recipients. Dean finished law school and enlisted in the U.S. Army's Special Forces after Sept. 11, 2001 and served in Afghanistan from 2006 through March 2008.

"Through cooperation with the IFA Educational Foundation, we are honored and delighted to provide business start-up grants to these individuals who have served their country on the frontlines and are now embarking on new careers as franchise business owners," said David Jordan, PepsiCo vice president of foodservice national accounts in Atlanta.

To qualify for the grant program, candidates must have been awarded a franchise by a VetFran participating company. Candidates must have a signed franchise agreement and at least one unit in operation or near completion. Candidates must also submit an application form with resume, military discharge certificate, name of franchisor, name and location of franchise business, 500-word essay describing the need for the grant and purpose for which funds will be used, and two letters of recommendation, including one from the franchisor.

VetFran, in which nearly 350 IFA members participate, was established to help honorably-discharged veterans transition from military to civilian life by offering them financial incentives to buy a franchise. To date, more than 1,155 franchises have been awarded and more than 200 franchises are currently in negotiation.