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**ASSOCIATED BODYWORK & MASSAGE PROFESSIONALS MARKS
61,000 MEMBERS AND 20 YEARS SERVING PROFESSION WITH
\$20,000 IN DONATIONS TO MASSAGE THERAPY ORGANIZATIONS**

(Evergreen, Colo., Oct. 23) - To commemorate its 20 years of service to the massage therapy profession, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) has given \$20,000 to non-profit massage therapy organizations in support of an improved profession-entry test instrument and a program encouraging the spread of massage research literacy. The recipients of two \$10,000 gifts are the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) of Overland Park, Kan. and the Massage Therapy Foundation of Evanston, Ill.

“ABMP recognizes that others share our desire to improve the profession and some of those institutions deserve financial as well as volunteer support,” said Les Sweeney, NCTM, and ABMP’s president. The gifts were made Oct. 19 at ABMP’s 11th School Issues Forum in Boston, a pioneering event that serves owners and directors of massage training schools.

“The FSMTB recently launched its Massage and Bodywork Licensing Exam (MBLEx) after a swift but thorough effort to create a nationally verified entry-level assessment instrument for the profession,” Sweeney said. The Federation was founded in 2005 to ensure massage therapy is provided to the public in a safe and effective manner.

“Now it’s time to take the story of that development effort to state massage therapy boards to persuade them to champion the exam as a clearly focused licensing examination for the profession,” he said. The ABMP contribution helps cover travel costs for the campaign.

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The Massage Therapy Foundation gift is designated for the Student Case Report Contest, a program founded in 2005 for massage therapy students to conduct client research case studies and summarize them in clinical case reports. The contest works with massage therapy school programs to develop research literacy and evidence-based practice habits in massage therapists. The Massage Therapy Foundation's mission is to advance the knowledge and practice of massage by supporting scientific research, education and community service.

"The massage therapy profession needs to home-grow researchers rather than depend on the work of physicians and other allied health practitioners to demonstrate the health benefits of massage," Sweeney said.

The commemorative gifts are made as ABMP celebrates two decades serving massage therapists and reaching its 61,000-member mark, making it the largest massage membership association in the nation.

"Leadership in membership calls out for leadership in advancing the profession," Sweeney said. Debra Persinger of FSMTB and Diana Thompson of the Massage Therapy Foundation accepted the awards at the Forum event.

ABMP also launched a comprehensive initiative in August to strengthen the educational experience and skills of massage school students nationwide, inspired by 1,800 ABMP staff visits over a decade that highlighted a need to better prepare massage therapy students for practice.

Headquartered in Evergreen, Colo., ABMP's mission is to serve the massage, bodywork and somatic therapy profession and to promote ethical practices, foster acceptance of the profession and protect the rights of legitimate massage and bodywork practitioners.