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National Jeweler and EGL Award Five FGA Scholarships

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SEPTEMBER 01, 2002 - NEW YORK -- Five talented recipients of the 2002 American FGA Scholarship Awards were honored at a presentation at the National Jeweler booth during the summer JA New York show, where attendees were invited to meet the recipients, members of the scholarship advisory board and the scholarship sponsors during a late afternoon wine and cheese reception.

The five honorees have won full tuition to pursue an FGA diploma from the prestigious Gemmological Association of Great Britain (Gem-A) through a correspondence course that typically lasts two years and culminates in an intensive two-day test, according to Mark Gershburg, director of the EGL USA gemological laboratory, a co-sponsor of the scholarship fund along with National Jeweler magazine.

Four of the scholarships were awarded to individuals working within the industry, while the fifth was presented to a student studying gemology at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City.

Terry Davidson, CEO of Gem-A, presented the awards to the two industry recipients at the ceremony: Laura Haas, owner, Haas & Co., Noblesville, and Kathleen Donovan, store manager of The Collector in San Diego, Calif., and president of the GIA Alumni Association's San Diego chapter. The two other industry recipients—Judith Anderson, designer and owner of Bijoux Extraordinaire in Manchester, N.H., and Leslie Scott, a sales associate and business coordinator at Smith & Bevill Jewelers in Beaverton, Ore.—were unable to attend the presentation.

Michelle Szymojko of Staten Island, N.Y., was present to accept her award as the scholarship's sole student recipient. She is a junior at FIT, majoring in jewelry design.

The FGA diploma, which stands for Fellow of the Gemmological Association, is considered to be the gemological world's highest scholarship degree. Only 213 Americans currently hold that degree, although Gem-A's brand new USA branch, based in Mandeville, La., is hoping to attract more people to its educational program through upcoming promotions. The scholarship program is one way to get the organization's name out on this side of the Pond.

Also at the awards presentation were members of the American FGA Scholarship Advisory Board, which comprises prominent industry experts. They are: Gershburg of EGL USA; Whitney Sielaff, publisher of National Jeweler; Michael Coan, acting chair of the Jewelry Design department at FIT; Richard Hughes, webmaster for Palagems.com; George E. Harlow, curator of Minerals and Gems at the American Museum of Natural History; and Kathryn Bonanno Patrizzi, a gem dealer and consultant for the Antiquorum auction house.