



**EQUALITY
ILLINOIS**

PRESS RELEASE

Founded in 1991, Equality Illinois is the state's oldest, largest and most effective organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 24, 2014

EQUALITY ILLINOIS HONORS STATE FARM WITH BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD *Recognition to Come at Midwest's Largest LGBT Gala*

CHICAGO – State Farm, a company founded in Bloomington, Illinois, that grew to become the nation's largest insurer of homes and cars and a leader in supporting its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees and customers, will receive the 2014 Equality Illinois Business Leadership Award.

The recognition of State Farm by Illinois' oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization will be bestowed at the Equality Illinois 2014 Gala, the Midwest's biggest LGBT formal event, on Feb. 8 in the Hilton Chicago.

"State Farm practices fairness and equality in its dealings with its associates and customers, which demonstrates that these values can come directly from Illinois' prairie heartland and be shared nationally," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois.

"We are truly honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois with the 2014 Business Leadership Award," said Annette R. Martinez, Vice President - Human Resources.

"State Farm is strongly committed to providing an inclusive environment that enables associates to do their best work for the customers we serve. We are also proud of the tremendous work of our 1200 member LGBT employee resource group that serves as a valuable resource by supporting employee development, community outreach and business initiatives," Martinez said.

The Business Leadership Award is given annually to firms that demonstrate remarkable vision, courage, and leadership in the effort to achieve full equality for LGBT individuals in Illinois. The 2014 Business Leadership Award will be presented at the Equality Illinois 2014 Gala, which is scheduled to take place on Saturday, February 8, at the Hilton Chicago. The gala chair is Colonel (IL) Jennifer N. Pritzker, IL ARNG (Retired). Past Business Leadership Award recipients include United Airlines, AT&T, Kraft, Walgreens, Motorola, and McDermott Will & Emery.

More information on the 2014 Equality Illinois Gala is on our website www.eqil.org.

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