

NEWS

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NORTH CASTLE PARTNERS SELLS EAS TO ABBOTT LABORATORIES

INCLUDES ADVANTEDGE®, MYOPLEX® AND *BODY-FOR-LIFE*® PRODUCT LINES

GREENWICH, Conn., October 11, 2004 – North Castle Partners, a leading private equity firm focused on healthy living and aging, today announced the sale of EAS, the preeminent, independent branded nutrition company in the United States, to Abbott Laboratories (NYSE:ABT).

Under the terms of the agreement, North Castle will receive from Abbott approximately \$320 million, in a cash-for-stock transaction.

This transaction is the second realization for North Castle Partners this year and will return more than 2.5 times their original investment. In April, North Castle announced a \$650 million recapitalization of Leiner Health Products that involved a sale of North Castle's existing majority stake in the company.

North Castle Partners Fund II acquired EAS in August 1999. At that time, EAS served the narrow but attractive and growing health fitness enthusiast market, including professional athletes. Over the succeeding five years, EAS management and NCP transformed the company from a high-end specialty retailer into a leading multi-channel,

consumer marketing company that develops, markets and distributes on a global basis the highest quality nutritional food and beverage products in a variety of convenient formats.

“Over the past five years, North Castle has worked with EAS management in its strategy to transfer product technology that was developed for high-end specialty users into products and brands that were successfully introduced into mass consumer channels and markets,” said North Castle Managing Director Brent Knudsen. “During that time North Castle also built the infrastructure and professional management team required to develop the product and distribution capability appropriate for EAS’ multi-channel business. Today, EAS is a leading independent nutrition company in the U.S.”

EAS markets some of the most highly recognized and respected brands in the \$62 billion U.S. nutrition industry, including AdvantEdge®, Myoplex®, *Body-for-LIFE*® and *EASHP*.

"This acquisition expands Abbott's presence in the rapidly growing Healthy Living category," said Gary E. McCullough, senior vice president for Abbott's Ross Products Division. "EAS's strong brands, broad distribution and innovative products and processes strategically fit with our commitment to offering consumers great nutrition choices based on solid science."

“We view Ross Products’ investment in us as a strong endorsement of our strategy and the success that we have achieved,” said Monty Sharma, chief executive officer and president of EAS. “We look forward to having a larger platform from which to continue to build our business as we develop the leading business in the high growth active nutrition market.”

About North Castle Partners

North Castle Partners is the leading private equity firm focused exclusively on investments in consumer businesses that address Healthy Living and Aging trends. As a

result of our unique focus, North Castle has developed an extensive network and knowledge base which enables us to bring a proprietary value added approach to our investments as we partner with accomplished, entrepreneurial management teams to build leading companies. To date, North Castle has invested over \$1.5 billion in a number of platforms including healthy food and beverage and nutritional supplement companies, natural personal care and cosmeceutical products, day spas and fitness clubs, luxury travel and substance abuse treatment. For more information visit www.northcastlepartners.com.

About EAS

Headquartered in Golden, CO, EAS is a leading marketer of products that provide complete nutrition to anyone wanting to improve his or her health and fitness—from elite athletes to health conscious consumers. EAS educates and inspires its customers to live a healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle through exercise and science-based nutrition products. EAS product lines include EAS Myoplex®, EAS HP and the EAS AdvantEdge® lines. For more information on EAS, visit www.eas.com.

About Abbott Laboratories

Abbott Laboratories is a global, broad-based health care company devoted to the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals and medical products, including nutritionals, devices and diagnostics. The company employs more than 55,000 people worldwide and markets its products in more than 130 countries. The company's Ross Products Division, which markets adult and pediatric nutritional products, is based in Columbus, Ohio. For more information, visit www.abbott.com or www.ross.com.

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