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ChinaNet Announces Open Applications for 2014 Annual Top Franchise Awards

BEIJING, Nov. 25, 2014 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- ChinaNet Online Holdings, Inc. (Nasdaq:CNET) ("ChinaNet" or the "Company"), a leading B2B (business to business) Internet technology company providing online-to-offline (O2O) sales channel expansion services for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurial management and networking services for entrepreneurs in the People's Republic of China, announced today it has opened its application process for its annual awards contest of "Top Franchises" in China.

The "2014 Annual Top Franchises" awards, organized by ChinaNet subsidiary Liansuo.com, opened applications in Beijing on November 16th and the registration deadline is on November 30th. Final awards winners will be announced on February 07, 2015. This was the second consecutive year that Liansuo.com organized the contest. The awards have gained support with leading media and websites including Baidu, Sina, Sohu, Tencent, and Netease.

With over 50 applicants within the first two days of enrollment, the contest includes many of the top franchise brands and enterprises in China including Sesame St. English, affiliated with the Sesame Workshop in the U.S.; Rongshida, a household appliances brand; Mendale, a textile enterprises company; Pure Fishing, the world's largest fishing tackle company and many more.

The contest includes awards for "Best Brand" and "Franchise Industry Elite". "Best Brand" includes awards for categories in Food, Education, Home, Clothing and Other. Voting for the contest will be open to ChinaNet's online users and franchisees, with majority votes taking the top spots.

"The franchise industry in China has experienced 50% to 60% growth, and according to data from the Ministry of Finance, China has become the world's largest franchise market," said George Chu, the COO of ChinaNet. "We continue to focus our efforts on this large and growing market by offering cost effective advertising and value-added services to franchisors. We hope to introduce more excellent franchise brands to investors and entrepreneurs through these awards. One client and contest applicant, Mendale, is a leading textile company that produces and distributes bed linens. Mendale is listed in China and has a market cap of approximately USD \$300 million, as well as 2,700 stores across the country. They've been working with us for almost two years and over this period they've continued to expand and increase their customer base despite a downturn in the market."

About ChinaNet Online Holdings, Inc.

The Company, a parent company of ChinaNet Online Media Group Ltd., incorporated in the BVI ("ChinaNet"), is a leading digital B2B (business to business) Internet technology company focusing on providing online to offline (O2O) sales channel expansion service for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurial management and networking service for entrepreneurs in China. The Company, through certain contractual arrangements with operating companies in the PRC, provides Internet advertising and other services for Chinese SMEs via its portal websites, 28.com, Liansuo.com and Chuangye.com, TV commercials and program production via China-Net TV, and in-house LCD advertising on banking kiosks targeting Chinese banking patrons. Website: <http://www.chinanet-online.com>.

Safe Harbor

This release contains certain "forward-looking statements" relating to the business of ChinaNet Online Holdings, Inc., which can be identified by the use of forward-looking terminology such as "believes," "expects," "anticipates," "estimates" or similar expressions. Such forward-looking statements involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties, including business uncertainties relating to government regulation of our industry, market demand, reliance on key personnel, future capital requirements, competition in general and other factors that may cause actual results to be materially different from those described herein as anticipated, believed, estimated or expected. Certain of these risks and uncertainties are or will be described in greater detail in our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. These forward-looking statements are based on ChinaNet's current expectations and beliefs concerning future developments and their potential effects on the Company. There can be no assurance that future developments affecting ChinaNet will be those anticipated by ChinaNet. These forward-looking statements involve a number of risks, uncertainties (some of which are beyond the control of the Company) or other assumptions that may cause actual results or performance to be materially different from those expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements. ChinaNet undertakes no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, except as may be required under applicable securities laws.

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