

BRAG

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JJ Thomas, Operating Vice President (OVP) for Diversity and Community Service and a 35-year Member of The Black Retail Action Group (BRAG) retires after 43 Years from Bloomingdale's

New York – JJ Thomas, of Bloomingdale's, a member of BRAG and the longest serving past president of BRAG, announced his retirement this month after 43 years of employment at the New York based retailer. Thomas, who began his career in the New York store in 1965, has been an integral part of the company and its quest to be inclusive of all people of color and diverse backgrounds for more than four decades.

Mr. Thomas began his employment in sales, and then was promoted to the Executive Training Program. He held positions as Assistant Buyer, Branch Department Manager, Assistant Store Manager for Operations, Buyer and Human Resources Officer over the span of his career at Bloomingdale's. In 1975 Thomas was promoted to Coordinator of Affirmative Action, and a few of years later he was promoted to Manager of Affirmative Action. In 1981 he advanced to Director of Equal Employment Opportunity Affairs, and in 1998 was promoted to Operating Vice President for Diversity and Community Service

Thomas, who successfully led BRAG for 16 years as its President will maintain an active role with the organization as a member of its Board of Directors. Bloomingdale's, a great supporter of BRAG under the auspices of Mr. Thomas, will continue its association with the organization in his absence. "In the past 43 years Thomas' contribution has focused Bloomingdale's on a diverse workplace" said William Baer, Sr. VP of Human Resources and Labor Relations. "On behalf of the entire Bloomingdale's family I wish him well as he enters the next phase of his life".

For more than 37 years, BRAG, a 501 (c) 3 not for profit organization, has promoted the acceptance and participation of men and women of color at all levels of retail and related industries. BRAG also remains loyal to its pledge of serving as one of the rare organizations that offers career/professional guidance and scholarships to high school and college students, as well as career counseling and mentoring to young professionals entering retail and related industries. Mr. Thomas has served as the Executive Director of BRAG'S acclaimed Summer Internship Program for many years – an eleven-week action-packed program with executive level work responsibilities, seminars, retail math classes and a business case study. Thomas will continue serving as a mentor and advisor to students (he currently mentors three students), retail executives and to BRAG at large. In 1998, BRAG created the JJ Thomas Innovators Award in honor of his tireless efforts to train, groom and mentor students and executives, and his commitment to community service. The Award is presented annually to a promising entrepreneur at BRAG'S Annual Scholarship and Awards Gala.

Considered by many to be an icon in the retail industry, Mr. Thomas has served on the New York City Board of Education's Advisory Council, the Advisory Board of the High School of Fashion Industries, and as Chairman of that Board for four years; the Advisory Board of the Adopt-A-Student Program of the High School of Fashion Industries and the Retail Advisory Board of Syracuse University. Thomas is a supporter of the New York and National Urban League, The Harlem YMCA, The Friends of Harlem Hospital, and a Life Member of the NAACP. He was honored as Employer of the Year in 1991 by the New York State Cooperative and Experiential Education Association and in 1992 received the National Charles S. Kettering Award for his outstanding contribution to the Philosophy and practice of Cooperative Education.

For more information please call 212-319-7751.