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For Immediate Release

NATIONAL SCHOOLS OF CHARACTER WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Competition Identifies 11 Outstanding Schools for Positive Youth Development

May 16, 2008 . . . Washington, D.C. – The Character Education Partnership (CEP) has named 10 schools and one school district as 2008 National Schools of Character.

This year was a record-setting year for the National Schools of Character program. “We received the highest number of applications in history, and the strength of the applications surpassed that of any other year,” said CEP Executive Director, Joe Mazzola. “Therefore, the selection of winners was the toughest yet.”

The winning schools’ array of programs in service learning, bullying prevention, mentoring, and tolerance combined with the assessment of the results within their schools provide evidence that quality character education improves not only social and emotional learning but also academic achievement.

Each winner will receive \$20,000 at CEP’s 15th National Forum on Character Education held October 17-19, 2008, in Arlington, Virginia. Winners must use their grants to train and mentor other schools and districts seeking to improve their character education efforts.

The NSOC application process requires extensive reporting, documentation, and assessment of each school or district’s culture, academics, and character education programs. CEP’s Blue Ribbon Panel, consisting of experts in the field of character education, considered the written applications and site visit reports of 25 finalists to determine the 11 winners.

The winners include four schools and one district from Missouri, two from New York, and one each from Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey, and Florida. Mazzola said, “The Missouri sweep is likely the result of long-term, bold leadership in character education throughout that state. However, all 11 winners truly are national exemplars for excellence in quality, comprehensive character education.”

The NSOC awards program is administered by the Character Education Partnership and made possible by generous support from the John Templeton Foundation, the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources, Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, and Lockheed Martin. The Character Education Partnership, based in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to helping schools develop people of good character for a just and compassionate society. To learn more about CEP and the National Schools of Character, visit www.character.org.

2008 National Schools of Character award winners

Babylon Memorial Grade School, Babylon, NY

Grades 3–6, 575 students, 15% on free or reduced lunch

This public school located between New York City and the Hamptons shares a campus with the district elementary school, facilitating a cross-age buddy program. Chocked full of character education materials in every corner, the school attributes its strong academic performance to its strong training on character, regards its media center as the school hub for character education, and boasts minimal behavior problems and high attendance.

Contact: Mr. Eric Freidman, Principal, efreidman@babylonschools.org, (631) 893-7980

Bower Hill Elementary School, Venetia, PA

Grades K-3, 783 students, 2% on free or reduced lunch

At Bower Hill, situated outside of Pittsburg, class meetings are held in every classroom, autistic children are integrated throughout the school community, and every student in the school participates in service-learning projects. High parental involvement, a wide variety of teaching strategies and special activities like “The Art of Listening” a daily program integrating art, music, and character education and Monday Mixers that allow students to examine academic areas, all allow children to flourish.

Contact: Mr. Michael P. Heneghan, Assistant Principal, heneghanm@pt-sd.org, (724) 941-0913

Chesterfield Elementary School, Chesterfield, MO

Grades K-5, 545 students, 5.5% free or reduced lunch

Located in a rapidly developing suburb of St. Louis, this school’s staff has trained other schools in some of their successful character education strategies. The Caring School Community leadership team consists of parents, staff and administration, and the school provides free transportation to parents who have had trouble attending school events. School-wide buddy classes meet regularly, and the P.E. teacher views his entire curriculum as character education opportunities.

Contact: Mrs. Jill Ramsey, Principal, ramseyjill@rockwood.k12.mo.us, (636) 537-4342

Frances Howell Middle School, St. Charles, MO

Grades 6-8, 800 students, 4% on free or reduced lunch

This public middle school utilizes daily advisement classes to foster relationships, and the principal ensures that she is often available to students for “Sound Outs.” A Challenge Leadership workshop involved more than 200 students and 50 teachers, resulting in the Student Council evolving into the “Be the Change” Team. Teachers integrate character education into academics daily, and nearly all special education students successfully cover the same material as regular students in integrated classes.

Contact: Mrs. Amy E. Johnston, Principal, amy.johnston@fhdschools.org, (636) 851-4892

Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, IL

Grades 9-12, 2652 students, 2.4% free or reduced lunch

Located outside Chicago, this sought-after high school assigns student Ambassadors to transfer students for a year to help with transition. It addresses peer cruelty often through skits, Conflict Resolution Training, and an acceptance of all clubs and organizations on campus. Voluntary service-learning participation in activities like Read to Lead, where students read to young children at Chicago libraries, is high. The school strives to raise the next generation of business leaders with solid ethics.

Contact: Mrs. Pam J. Bylsma, Assistant Principal, pbylsma@hinsdale86.org, (630) 570-8000

Lindberg School District, St. Louis County, MO

Grades PK-12, 5597 students, 15% on free or reduced lunch

Covering 28 square miles in St. Louis County, this school district highlights service to others as a teaching strategy to develop competent and caring graduates; the district administration models their

commitment to service regularly. The district prides itself on excellent facilities maintenance; high academic performance in the schools; recognition of numerous district teams, clubs, and publications; and per-pupil spending that is less than the median amount spent by surrounding suburban districts.

Contact: Mrs. Amy Richards, District Coordinator, arichards@lindberghschools.ws, (314) 729-2400

Rosa International Middle School (grades 6-8), Cherry Hill, NJ

Grades 6-8, 778 students, 6% on free or reduced lunch

At this public magnet school offering the IB curriculum, two staff in-service days per year allow focused concentration on character education planning. The daily Advisory program is a cornerstone of the character education initiative, providing time for students to conduct service activities, engage in buddy programs, or get extra academic help. Nine learning communities create a sense of a small family. A Character Education Committee, consisting of 20 teachers, staff, and parents, meets monthly.

Contact: Ms. Jennifer L. Parks, Character Education Chair, jparks@chclc.org, (856) 616-8787

Sappington Elementary School, St. Louis, MO

Grades K-5, 455 students, 18% on free or reduced lunch

Four years of character education have improved this school's climate; student disciplinary referrals have decreased and state test scores have increased. Parents form Buddy Families to welcome new families to the school community. Unique service opportunities and academic connections include a buddy program with an Alaska school and a partnership with the local historical society. Monthly Buddy Day activities bring varying age groups together, and character-focused class meetings occur every three days.

Contact: Mrs. Kaye A. Rueschhoff, Teacher, krueschhoff@lindberghschools.ws, (314) 729-2460

Valley Park Middle School, Valley Park, MO

Grades 6-8, 236 Students, 51% on free or reduced lunch

Located outside St. Louis, this school partners with a local judge to run the Truancy and Academic Assist Group, which assists students who may "fall through the cracks." Weekly Hawk Time activities focus on character development activities, and an eMints program, a technology based program designed for self-discovery, encourages questioning. The Bully Awareness Network ensures that little to no bullying occurs at the school.

Contact: Dr. Tad Savage, Principal, tsavage@vp.k12.mo.us, (636) 923-3624

Waterloo Middle School, Waterloo, NY

Grades 6-8, 439 students, 48% on free or reduced lunch

Located in New York's Finger Lakes region, this public school has shown a 50% decrease in discipline problems in the past year, and a 97% daily attendance rate. Ceiling tiles decorated with character traits hang throughout the school building. Advisement groups called P.R.I.D.E. meet daily to explore different character themes and activities. Monthly assemblies feature community members discussing character in their own lives. Students lead the anti-bullying RESPECT Team as well as service projects.

Contact: Mrs. Karen J. Moretti, Character Education Chair, kmoretti@wcs.k12.ny.us, (315) 539-1540

Wilton Manors Elementary School (grades PK-5), Wilton Manors, FL

Grades PK-5, 610 students, 72% on free or reduced lunch

Located in Broward County, this diverse school created "A Passport to Peace," which promotes 12 positive attitudes and nine actions. Strong Student Council leadership takes action in the school and community, and a school-wide Character Patrol Club provide positive reinforcement to kids doing the right thing. The Think About Behavior area is used for time-out activities. Embedded character instruction and rigorous academics have resulted in caring students with strong critical thinking skills.

Contact: Mrs. Ana M. Leon, Guidance Counselor, ana.leon@browardschools.com, (754) 322-8950.

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