

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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HISPANIC HERITAGE YOUTH AWARDS TO HONOR AND PRESENT 21 HOUSTON-AREA HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WITH MORE THAN A HALF MILLION DOLLARS IN GRANTS FOR LEADERSHIP IN CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY

Rice University to Host Ceremony, Local Students Eligible for National Award and Travel to Washington, DC

WASHINGTON, DC—The Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) today announced the recipients of the Houston Regional Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards (HHYA). Twenty-one local high school seniors and one teacher will be honored for their leadership in the classroom and community and promoted as role models for their peers during a ceremony at Rice University on Tuesday, May 20, 2008.

The 2008 Houston Youth Awardees will each receive educational grants in the amounts of \$3,000 for Gold Medallion, \$2,000 for Silver Medallion and \$1,000 for Bronze Medallion Awardees. The Teacher Award, presented by Staples Foundation for Learning, will recognize a teacher that has made a significant impact on the lives of students and will be announced at the Awards ceremony.

In 12 regions across the country, 252 Youth Awardees will receive more than \$500,000 in total grants after being selected from an original pool of thousands of applications. The Houston Regional Youth Award recipients are:

Academic Excellence, for extraordinary academic achievement, presented by the Sprint Foundation:

Jeremy Guardiola of Texas City, TX – Texas City High School - Gold Medallion
Aleida Gamez of Baytown, TX – Ross S. Sterling High School - Silver Medallion
Javier Bernardo Stell-Fresquez of El Paso, TX – Socorro High School - Bronze Medallion

Business, for strong business aptitude, sponsored by the National Society of Hispanic MBAs:

Arne Avalo Guerra of Edinburg, TX – Edinburg High School - Gold Medallion
Jorge E. Dominguez of Houston, TX – Channelview High School - Silver Medallion
Rusbel Limas of Edinburg, TX - Edinburg High School - Bronze Medallion

Education, for demonstrated desire to be among the next generation of teachers, sponsored by Southwest Airlines (also the Official Airline of the HHYA):

Cristina Doreen Hinojosa of Boling, TX – Boling High School - Gold Medallion
Andrea Carolina Sidel of Houston, TX – Spring High School - Silver Medallion
Yesenia Gomez of Mission, TX – La Joya Senior High School - Bronze Medallion

Engineering and Mathematics, for innovation in mathematics, engineering, or technology, sponsored by ExxonMobil:

Cynthia Reyna of Houston, TX – Charles H. Milby High School - Gold Medallion
Ivan Lloyd Hernandez of Lumberton, TX – Lumberton High School - Silver Medallion
Christina Michelle Peña of Houston, TX – Alief Hastings Senior High School - Bronze Medallion

Journalism, for creativity and integrity in print, broadcast, or web-based media, sponsored by NBC Universal/Telemundo:

Stephanie Eve Madrid of Houston, TX – Cypress Ridge High School - Gold Medallion
Carlos Augustus Blanco of Webster, TX – YES Prep Southeast - Silver Medallion
Jalisa Walker of Austin, TX – Del Valle High School - Bronze Medallion

Leadership, for excellent leadership skills in the classroom and community, sponsored by Sallie Mae (also the Official Student Loan Partner of the HHYA):

Luis Manuel Lopez of Beaumont, TX – Central Medical Magnet School - Gold Medallion
Maria Fernanda Velasquez of Katy, TX – Cinco Ranch High School - Silver Medallion
Gabriel Abraham Marengo of Tomball, TX – Tomball High School - Bronze Medallion

Sports, for athletic prowess and sportsmanship, sponsored by SUBWAY® Restaurants:

John Christian Perez of Humble, TX – Atascocita High School - Gold Medallion
Vanessa Francis Tam of Glendale, CO – Cherry Creek High School - Silver Medallion
Johanna Estefania Sidel of Houston, TX – Spring High School - Bronze Medallion

Regional committees select Awardees from the thousands of applications submitted by graduating high school seniors of Hispanic descent. Selection criteria include academic achievement, community service, and category focus.

"We are so proud of the Youth Awards program, which is progressing by leaps and bounds with more sponsor involvement, celebrity participation, and most importantly, student recognition." said José Antonio Tijerino, President and CEO of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation. "The Houston Awardees are role models and leaders who excel inside and outside of the classroom. They and their fellow regional honorees represent the next generation of emerging Hispanic professionals, and we are committed to providing them with opportunity and support."

"The students being honored are an inspiration to us all," said actor Wilmer Valderrama, Official Spokesperson of the 2008 Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards and *Inspira* Award Recipient. "These young leaders are setting a positive example not only for the Hispanic community, but for people throughout the country. The determination, generosity of spirit, and accomplishment they have demonstrated at such young ages are only a small fraction of what they will eventually go on to achieve, and I applaud their hard work."

The success of the Youth Awards program is predicated by the support of thousands of high schools, community organizations, and business partners. In addition to the category sponsors listed above, the *Inspira* Award is presented by Hershey's. Official Sponsors of the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards include Allianz Life, Hilton Hotels Corporation, Sallie Mae, Southwest Airlines, Target, and Wachovia. Youth Award Partners include the Hispanic College Fund, *VMe*, and Voto Latino. Hispanic Heritage Foundation Partners and Sponsors include Home Builders Institute, National Association of Home Builders, Lowe's, the National Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA), Pulte Homes, Sprint Foundation, and UPS.

After the local ceremonies, the 252 Regional Youth Awards recipients will be narrowed to one National Youth Award recipient for each of the seven categories. Those individuals will be honored at the National Youth Awards presentation, where each student will receive an additional \$5,000 educational grant and a laptop computer. The National Youth Awardees will be then be presented with their award onstage during a special ceremony of the 22nd Annual Hispanic Heritage Awards in Washington, DC on October 9, 2008.

About the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards

The Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards were created to identify and promote the next generation of role models by celebrating their accomplishments in the classroom and community. These young leaders are promoted as role models for their peers. With the Youth Awards as a feeder program, the LOFT (Latinos on Fast Track) initiative was launched in 2004 to systematically develop sustainable relationships between top Hispanic young professionals who have been awarded and America's workforce.

The Hispanic Heritage Foundation, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization, identifies, prepares, and positions Latino leaders in the community, classroom and workforce through national cultural, educational, and career development programs. For more information about the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, please visit www.HispanicHeritage.org.

NOTE: To sponsor the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards and other Hispanic Heritage Foundation programs please call 202.861.9797.