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ACTOR WILMER VALDERRAMA TO DELIVER KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR SPECIAL YOUTH LUNCHEON HOSTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION

National Young Leaders to Attend Event as Part of Hispanic Heritage Awards Celebration

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Actor and producer Wilmer Valderrama, who recently received the Hispanic Heritage Foundation’s (HHF) Inspira Youth Award for his representation of Latinos in entertainment, will deliver the keynote address during a special Latino Leaders Network Youth Luncheon focused on youth. More than 100 young Latino leaders from across the country will be flown in by Southwest Airlines (the Official Airlines of the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards) for the event which will take place from **12:00 - 2:00 pm on Thursday, October 11th at the Capital Hilton Presidential Ballroom , 1001 16th Street, NW, in Washington, DC.** The youth-based event is a special addition to the quarterly series hosted by the Latino Leaders Network™ and founder, Mickey Ibarra, to provide a platform for prominent Latino leaders to network and share their personal stories of obstacles overcome to achieve success. The lunch will feature past awardees of HHF’s 10-year-old leadership program, known as the Youth Awards. That same evening, HHF will celebrate Latino leadership, pride and culture with the star-studded 21st Annual Hispanic Heritage Awards.

“We are proud to partner with Mickey Ibarra and the Latino Leaders Network™ to bring together young Latino leaders who have already started moving our community forward,” said Jose Antonio Tijerino, president and CEO of the HHF. “We will be celebrating the 10-year anniversary of our Youth Awards program with an amazingly accomplished group of young people who inspire not only their peers, but community members of all ages as well. I’m also pleased to highlight the commitment of Wilmer to represent Latinos in entertainment, which made him our first Inspira Youth Award. His story is a living illustration of the immigrant’s experience and the ability of everyone to achieve the American Dream, no matter their roots.

Valderrama is truly living the American dream. At age 13, he moved with his family from Venezuela to Los Angeles where he quickly learned English and enrolled in high school drama classes to help integrate into American culture. From high school plays and early roles on network television to his breakthrough role on *That 70’s Show*, big screen acclaim, and his own production company, Valderrama inspires younger generations with his hard work, determination, and creative spirit. In honor of his accomplishments and to encourage his pursuit of future success, Valderrama received HHF’s Youth Awards’ inaugural Inspira Award. While on stage to receive his award, in an emotional moment, Valderrama offered each of the National Youth Awardees present additional scholarship money.

Recently, Valderrama played the role of a migrant worker in the movie “Fast Food Nation” opposite Ethan Hawke, Patricia Arquette, and Academy Award Nominee Catalina Sandino Moreno; and the 2006 holiday feature “Unaccompanied Minors,” as well as the Sundance hit “The Darwin Awards.” He will be starring as Ponch in the movie-version of *CHiPs*.”

Valderrama also served as the creator, producer and the voice of Latino children's hero Manny Garcia in the animated Disney Channel series "Handy Manny." He can also be seen in the indie film "El Muerto," based on the successful comic book created by Javier Hernandez, where he will star as 'Diego de la Muerte,' a 21 year old, who is abducted, sacrificed and resurrected by the Aztec Gods of Death and Destiny.

Sponsors for the youth-based Latino Leaders Network Lunch will be ExxonMobil and Southwest Airlines, who also serve as top-level supporters of the Youth Awards programs. Media partners include the Hispanic Communications Network, HITN-TV, Latino Leaders Magazine, and El Tiempo Latino.

The first Latino Leaders Luncheon was held in 2004 and featured then Representative Bob Menendez. In 2005, speakers included Senator Ken Salazar and Representative John Salazar, brothers from Colorado currently serving in Congress, delivering joint keynote addresses; Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa delivering a keynote address just days after his historic 2005 victory; and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales headlining the luncheon in November. In 2006, the luncheon series featured Senator Bob Menendez; Texas State Senator Leticia Van de Putte; Father Virgilio Elizondo, a Hispanic Heritage Awardee; and actress Eva Longoria. In 2007, luncheon speakers have included Presidential Candidate and Governor Bill Richardson (D-NM), and Oregon State Superintendent of Public Instruction Susan Castillo, and NY Mets General Manager Omar Minaya. Details and photos from each of these events are available on the Latino Leaders Network™ website (www.LatinoLeadersNetwork.org).

Latino Leaders Network™ (LLN) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to promote the social and economic advancement of the Latino community in the United States by developing opportunities for current and prospective Latino leaders to meet and dialogue on issues of concern. In addition to the Latino Leaders Luncheon Series™, other signature events supported by the LLN are the Latino Leaders Issue Hour and the Latino Mayors Tribute. Mickey Ibarra, Founder and Chair of LLN, is the President of Mickey Ibarra & Associates, a government relations and public affairs firm that hosts the events of the LLN. He served as Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House from 1997 to 2001. In addition to Mickey Ibarra, the Board of Directors of the Network includes: Michelle Minguez Moore, Executive Director; Maria Teresa Petersen, the founding Executive Director for Voto Latino; Raul L. Rubio, a government affairs consultant; and Ruben Alvarez, co-founder and Managing Partner of the Molera Alvarez Group.

The 21-year-old Hispanic Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, which provides year-round leadership, cultural and educational programs which include: youth, mentoring, workforce development and the Hispanic Heritage Awards (click www.HHFvideo.com or visit www.HispanicHeritage.org).

For 10 years the Youth Awards program has recognized the accomplishments of high school seniors in the classroom and community. In 2007 alone, nearly 300 regional recipients were selected from 13,000 applicants and received more than \$600,000 in educational grants in various categories. The average GPA for the Youth Awardees was nearly a perfect 4.0 and special ceremonies at prestigious colleges and universities were coordinated in honor the students in 13 cities including: LA, NY, DC, Philadelphia/NJ, Miami, Chicago, Denver, San Diego, San Jose/Bay Area, Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, and Phoenix. This past year, HHF created the first national Hispanic Heritage Teacher Award where the Regional Youth Awardees nominated the teacher who made the biggest difference in their lives, serving as a testimony to the educator's commitment and 12 awardees were recognized.

The Hispanic Heritage Awards were created in 1987 by a White House task force to commemorate the creation of Hispanic Heritage Month. The distinction and ceremony are recognized as an amalgam of the Image Awards and the “Kennedy Center Honors for Hispanics” and will take place on Oct. 11 in Washington, DC. The Hispanic Heritage Awards honor notable Latinos who have distinguished themselves in various fields and made a positive impact on America. The program is hosted by 37 national Hispanic organizations who also served as the nominating committee. The Hispanic Heritage Awards are unique because Latino leaders in the entertainment industry such as Anthony Quinn, Gloria Estefan, Placido Domingo, Rita Moreno, Jose Feliciano, Celia Cruz, and many others take their place alongside educators, community activists, authors, elected officials, businesspeople, and doctors (please click www.HHAceremony.com).

Notes: Participation in the Latino Leaders Luncheon Series™ is by invitation only. For more information, please contact Michelle Minguéz Moore at 202-969-8777. Media wishing to cover the luncheon are asked to RSVP to Nicole Williams at 202-904-2004.

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