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For Immediate Release

LOCAL AVENTURA CITY OF EXCELLENCE SCHOOL SELECTED AS FINALIST IN NATIONAL CHARACTER EDUCATION COMPETITION

Winners to be selected in May

March 3, 2008 . . . Washington, DC – Stellar character education programs including ACES Community Care Outreach Program have earned Aventura City of Excellence School, (ACES) a spot as a National Finalist in the Character Education Partnership (CEP)'s National Schools of Character (NSOC) awards program.

CEP, the nation's leading advocate for quality character education initiatives, chose 25 finalists from the United States. CEP is conducting site visits to all finalists throughout the end of April. A team of evaluators will visit Aventura City of Excellence School on 4/07/08. CEP's Blue Ribbon Panel will then meet to select 10 winners in late May.

"Being chosen as a finalist in the National Schools of Character competition is a remarkable achievement," CEP Executive Director Joe Mazzola said. "I applaud each school and district's commitment to positive youth development."

Finalists have undergone a rigorous application process that demonstrates their work with the ethical, social, and academic growth of their students through effective character education. The ACES Community Care Outreach Program, ties the ACES Curriculum into the Living Values Character Education Program to engage students in projects that impact the world around them. Students serve as role models for each other and for the community as they practice living 12 core values. Through student-selected service projects, ACES students celebrate their commitment to values by launching fundraisers to aid Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetics in Africa, Heart Disease and Cancer Research.

Should Aventura City of Excellence School be selected as a National School of Character, it will receive the award, national recognition, and a grant of \$20,000 at CEP's 15th National Forum on Character Education, *Character is Destiny*, to be held October 2008 in Arlington, Virginia. Winners use their grants to serve as national leaders and models for other schools and districts seeking to improve their character education efforts.

Principal, Julie Alm said, "We are very proud of ACES placing as national finalist for this great honor. Our "Whole Child" approach places students at the center of their own learning experience. Our students discover at a very young age the importance of being socially responsible, caring and contributing citizens. ACES excels in student achievement, community involvement and innovative practices, while caring for our families, our community and our students' individual needs."

City Manager, Eric Soroka states, "With teamwork, anything is possible. The City of Aventura is proud of the way that that ACES administration, staff, students, families and the community have worked together to achieve such a noteworthy accomplishment."

For ten years, the NSOC awards program has recognized K–12 schools and districts that provide exemplary character education programs that yield positive results in student behavior, citizenship, school climate, and academic performance. CEP, based in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to developing young people of good character who become responsible and caring citizens.

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**Character Education Partnership
2008 National Schools of Character Award Finalists**

2008 NSOC National Finalists

Alta S. Leary Elementary School, Warminster, PA
Ankeney Middle School, Beavercreek, OH
Arlington Traditional School, Arlington, VA
Aventura City of Excellence School, Aventura, FL
Babylon Memorial Grade School, Babylon, NY
Bayless Junior High School, Saint Louis, MO
Bower Hill Elementary School, Venetia, PA
Brigantine Elementary School, Brigantine, NJ
Chesterfield Elementary School, Chesterfield, MO
Francis Howell Middle School, St. Charles, MO
Gainesville High School, Gainesville, GA
Greenfield Elementary School, Beverly Hills, MI
Hamilton Township School District, Hamilton, NJ
Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, IL
Lindbergh School District, Saint Louis, MO
Lore Elementary School, Ewing, NJ
Marengo Ranch Elementary School, Galt, CA
Mill Pond School, Westborough, MA
Price Laboratory School, Cedar Falls, IA
Rosa International Middle School, Cherry Hill, NJ
Sappington Elementary School, St. Louis, MO
Valley Park Middle School, Valley Park, MO
Waterloo Middle School, Waterloo, NY
Westwood Elementary School, Friendswood, TX
Wilton Manors Elementary School, Wilton Manors, FL

Geographic distribution:

The 2008 National Finalists represent 14 states. Five states have two or more finalists: Missouri (6), New Jersey (4), Florida (2), New York (2), and Pennsylvania (2). In 2008, 20 states participated in the State Schools of Character awards program, a preliminary step in reaching the national level of competition. All but three of the 25 National Finalists were part of this process and named State Finalists in their states.

Demographics:

Most of the 2008 finalists are public schools although two are districts and one is a private school. Thirteen of the twenty-three schools are elementary schools, six are middle schools, two are high schools, and two have a mix of grade levels. Most finalists are located in suburban settings, although two of the schools are urban and two of the schools are located in rural areas. A number of the finalists have student populations that may be described as low-income; 7 have one-third or more of their students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

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