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Inspiring Words from New CEO, Drs. Angelou and Gupta Highlight PTA National Convention

Powerful acts by Reflections national awards recipients awe crowd

CHICAGO (June 25, 2008) –PTA’s biggest event of the year attracted thousands of families and child advocates to San Diego this past weekend. The event featured the passing of the torch to a new national PTA chief executive officer, as well as stirring addresses by Drs. Maya Angelou and Sanjay Gupta and much more.

A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

Byron V. Garrett was officially introduced to PTA members as the new and first-ever male, African-American CEO of the national PTA. In his remarks, Garrett paid homage to the founders of PTA and to his predecessor, Warlene Gary. He said, “Now is the time for us to build a bridge from the past to the present and the future.”

He urged PTA members to “remain on the cutting edge for our children and the members we serve.” Garrett told attendees, “There is an urgent wake up call in society today...the call is for you.”

“Many of you are digital immigrants while most of our children today are digital natives...Many of the young parents in society today have no concept of weekly meetings as they struggle to work two jobs or work and go to school. Many of our potential student members are not concerned about process, but rather want to be engaged in progress.”

“Many parents today are looking for new, relevant ways to get engaged in PTA. Whether it’s through POD casts or virtual PTAs, you must push the envelope and begin to think differently. If MySpace, Facebook, YouTube or Linked In are foreign terms to you...you are disconnected.”

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

“You are all rainbows...” Dr. Angelou told the thousands of attendees in a standing-room-only ballroom. “You all come together to make the lives of our country’s children and children all over the world better... You all have courage! And courage is the greatest of all virtues because without courage you can do no others consistently.”

National PTA president Jan Harp Domene honored Dr. Angelou as the first-ever recipient of the PTA Founder's Award, an award established to honor the mission of our PTA founders to serve as exemplary individual advocates.

In his keynote address, Dr. Gupta, CNN's chief medical correspondent, focused on the growing epidemic of childhood obesity--"a problem to which many have become complacent." He said, "This is one of the most important issues of our time. Our children may be the first generation that lives shorter life spans than we do."

Dr. Gupta also gave tips on breaking the cycle of obesity: "Make sure your child eats seven different colored foods a day...making sure we exercise...rescue recess in the schools... and creating grassroots programs that get kids moving."

Domene honored Dr. Gupta for his continued effort to promote the issues surrounding child health and wellness. Gupta received PTA's Commitment to America's Children Award which celebrates exceptional and distinguished service to the nation's communities by supporting education and children.

RECOGNIZING CHILDREN IN THE ARTS

Six students received Outstanding Interpretation Awards for Reflections, a program that encourages student achievement in the arts. Amazing attendees, the students showed off their award-winning talent. The recipients were:

- **Outstanding Interpretation for Dance Choreography**
"Treating All People Equally" Rachel Kessinger, Grade 7
Jackson Heights Middle School PTSA Oviedo, Fla.
- **Outstanding Interpretation for Film/Video Production**
"An Influential Language" Elizabeth Breazile, Grade 12
Stony Point High School PTSA Round Rock, Texas
- **Outstanding Interpretation for Literature**
"Penny Dishes" Daniel Ewert, Grade 12
Germantown High School PTA Germantown, Wis.
- **Outstanding Interpretation for Musical Composition**
"You Can Make a Difference" Jordan Kamalu, Grade 12
Davis High School PTA Kaysville, Utah
- **Outstanding Interpretation for Photography**
"I Can Make a Difference by Changing My Perspective" Kate Hehmann, Grade 10
Union Intermediate High School PTSA Broken Arrow, Okla.
- **Outstanding Interpretation for Visual Arts**
"I can make a difference by making global warming vanish" Hansub Kim, Grade 2
Wonderland Avenue PTA Los Angeles, Calif.

The convention also featured an action-packed Parents Expo of more than 200 exhibitors, as well as almost 40 workshops to provide parents and students with information, resources and connections to prepare for back-to-school time and to help their children succeed.

ABOUT PTA

PTA comprises more than 5.5 million parents and other concerned adults devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA flourishes in more than 25,000 school communities nationwide by harnessing the energy and talents of millions of volunteers to be: voices for all children; relevant resources for families and communities; and champions for the education and well-being of every child. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who is concerned about the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.