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ARIZONA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AND HELIOS EDUCATION FOUNDATION AWARD \$900,000 FOR EDUCATION REFORM PROJECTS

Beat the Odds Institute and Stand for Children each receive first-time \$450,000 grants

PHOENIX—The Arizona Community Foundation and Helios Education Foundation proudly announce the award of \$900,000 to two nonprofit organizations to expand education reform efforts in Arizona over the next three years. The recipients are Phoenix-based Beat the Odds Institute, an initiative of the Center for the Future of Arizona, and Portland, Ore.-based Stand for Children, which will expand to Arizona thanks to the grant funding.

The grants are being paid from the new Accio Education Fund, a “venture capital” type of charitable fund created by ACF and Helios to support the development and expansion of innovative education reform efforts for the benefit of Arizona students. Each foundation provided \$450,000 to the Fund, which is being held and managed at ACF.

Beat the Odds Institute, an initiative of the Center for the Future of Arizona, began as a research study aimed at learning how to get great results in schools with mostly low-income, mostly minority students. The findings, published in 2006, pointed to six keys, or principles, for success and called for the implementation of these best practices into every school in Arizona. The Beat the Odds Institute and the BTO School Partners Program were established in 2007 by Lattie Coor under the umbrella of the Center for the Future of Arizona to disseminate information, offer training and provide support to schools and districts implementing the Beat the Odds principles. The program focuses on what is working in Arizona schools, resulting in better-than-expected academic performance instead of focusing on what isn't working.

The Accio grant will be used to expand the BTO School Partners Program from the current 59 participating schools, all of which are in the Greater Phoenix area, to 90 schools in 2009-2010 by adding Pima and Pinal counties; 120 schools in 2010-2011 by adding the Flagstaff and Yuma areas; and to at least 200 schools—two-thirds of the total number in the state that fit the demographic model—by 2015.

Stand for Children is a non-partisan, grassroots nonprofit organization that builds effective local and statewide networks of parents, educators, and concerned community members who use the power of grassroots action to help all children get the excellent public education and support they need to thrive. Following specific priorities affirmed by state members, the group focuses on securing adequate funding for public schools and reforming education policies and practices to help children thrive academically, giving them the opportunities they need to become successful, productive citizens.

The Accio grant will allow Stand for Children to establish an affiliate in Arizona. Currently, Stand has affiliates in Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Colorado, all of which advocate for education reforms in a respectful, non-partisan way.

“Along with the state and national experts who reviewed the applicants, we felt that Beat the Odds and Stand for Children had the greatest promise for significant impact on statewide systemic reform based on their organizational track records and glowing comments from people on the ground who have already been impacted by their programs,” said Jim Pitofsky, ACF’s education director.

“Helios Education Foundation believes that education changes lives, and we see our partnership with the Arizona Community Foundation and the Accio Education Fund as a unique opportunity to impact and improve student achievement statewide,” said Paul Luna, Helios president and CEO.

“Both the Beat the Odds Institute and Stand for Children have an innovative and comprehensive plan that’s not only focused on bridging the achievement gap, but also aimed at improving student proficiency and preparedness. Those goals are clearly aligned with our mission, and Helios is excited to be part of this initiative,” Luna added.

The two recipient organizations were chosen after a thorough and inclusive six-month selection process. In early 2009, ACF and Helios sought nominations from a vast field of local

and national organizations, funders and businesses. Their request specifically called for innovative education reform programs already in Arizona and those from other states considering expansion to Arizona. True start-up efforts were not encouraged for nomination, but consideration was given to expansion of an organization's proven, successful model if front-end investment had already been made and the applicant could demonstrate relevant experience to date.

After several interviews, a smaller group of semi-finalists was invited to submit proposals. This pool was then winnowed down to three in-state and three out-of-state finalists who then were interviewed by a distinguished group of panelists representing geographic and ethnic diversity as well as varying types of professional expertise. The out-of-state panel had representation from the Gates Foundation and Target, two of the nation's most prominent philanthropic grantmakers.

The Accio grants will be paid over a three-year period in annual installments of \$250,000, \$125,000, and \$75,000, and will include intense staff engagement and technical and strategic assistance provided by ACF and Helios, and each organization will receive support from a full-time AmeriCorps*VISTA member.

“In alliance with our great partners at Helios, we will provide significant funds and time to support the outstanding leadership of these two organizations to improve the expectations, learning and results for Arizona's students,” said Pitofsky.

About the Arizona Community Foundation

The Arizona Community Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization with four regional offices serving 13 affiliate community foundations. Established in 1978 and certified under the National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations, ACF is among the top 30 community foundations in the nation with \$400 million in trust and endowment assets. Because a quality education system is a key driver of Arizona's economic competitiveness and overall quality of life, education reform has become a top priority for Arizona's philanthropic sector. Supported by significant donor interest and dedicated giving—including a \$52 million bequest from the John Ellis Family in 2005—the Arizona Community Foundation has made education reform one of its flagship initiatives. More information is available at www.azfoundation.org.

About Helios Education Foundation

Helios Education Foundation is the largest philanthropic organization serving Arizona and Florida focused solely on education. The Foundation is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals in Arizona and Florida by creating opportunities for success in postsecondary education and its community investments are made across three impact areas: Early Childhood Education, the Transition Years (grades 5-12) and Postsecondary Education. Since inception in 2004, Helios Education Foundation has invested over \$62 million into education-related programs and initiatives in both states. For more information, visit the Foundation online at www.helios.org.