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NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARDS FOR MOCK ELECTION PARTICIPATION

State to be Honored with Visit of Rare Original Copy of Declaration of Independence

Trenton, NJ, June 17, 2009 – The National Student/Parent Mock Election, the Pearson Foundation, and the non-profit youth voter registration organization Declare Yourself have selected New Jersey schools as national winners for their participation in the National Student/Parent Mock Election campaign last fall. The schools in the state of New Jersey were chosen from thousands of participating schools for the impressive scope of their voter education and mock election campaigns.

As winners, New Jersey will have the opportunity for a two-day exhibition of an original copy of the Declaration of Independence printed July 4, 1776. One of only 25 known copies of the Dunlap imprint in existence, the rare document will be on display June 24 and 25 in Trenton as part of the celebration of *New Jersey Day*—an observance of the 345th anniversary of New Jersey's founding as a British proprietary colony.

On June 24, New Jersey students' efforts will be officially honored at a ceremony at the State Museum in Trenton. At this event, New Jersey will also be recognized for its student voter education initiatives by the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

"I am proud of the educators and students who participated in the 2008 New Jersey Student/Parent Mock Election. This worthy civic exercise teaches our children the importance of voting and taking an active role in the democratic process. Recognition must also be given to the National Student/Parent Mock Election, the Pearson Foundation, and Declare Yourself for the collaborative tour and for making this an even more meaningful experience for our children," said Secretary of State Nina Mitchell Wells, Esq.

The National Student/Parent Mock Election is conducted throughout the United States as a voter-education program to teach the nation's youth about the importance of voting on a ballot similar to one used in the General Election. The New Jersey Press Foundation coordinated the Garden State's 2008 effort.

"We were so grateful for the way numerous statewide organizations actively cooperated to promote student-voter turnout," according to Arthur Hall, president of the New Jersey Press Foundation's board of trustees and publisher of the *Cape May County Herald Times*. "And thanks to the state's enthusiastic principals and teachers, several hundred-thousand students

grabbed the opportunity to experience first-hand a grown-up's most vital civic duty. That New Jersey has received national recognition for this effort, including the visit of such an awe-inspiring artifact, is just very special.”

On July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson completed the final draft of the Declaration of Independence and rushed it to the local print shop of John Dunlap in Philadelphia. Dunlap printed an estimated 200 copies on large poster size sheets of paper called broadsides, which were immediately sent to the colonies and King George to officially declare America as independent from England.

In 1989 a flea market shopper purchased a frame he admired for \$4.00. Later, he removed a piece of paper wedged between the frame and the painting and discovered what would soon be authenticated by the Getty Museum as the 25th remaining copy of the Declaration of Independence.

Declare Yourself founder Norman Lear and his wife Lyn purchased the copy in 2000 for \$8.1 million, with the goal of bringing "the people's document" directly to the American people. The document remains as the only touring copy of the Declaration of Independence and is part of a multimedia exhibit travelling across the United States to engage and energize all Americans, particularly young people, to participate in civic activism and to vote. The national tour is being underwritten by the Pearson Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the education and technology company Pearson.

“New Jersey is so fortunate to be honored with this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to exhibit the only copy of the Declaration of Independence that tours. This is a vivid reminder of how far we have come as a nation on the principles of the founding fathers and the conviction to create a free democracy,” said Secretary Wells.

In total, the original copy of the Declaration of Independence will visit six cities across the country to honor each winning school, which include Andrew Carnegie Middle School (Carson, CA); Curie Metropolitan High School (Chicago); the Dade County School system (FL); Austin Independent School District (TX); and the schools in the state of Arizona.

The Declaration of Independence will go on display at the State Museum at 2 p.m. on June 24, 2009, as part of New Jersey's 345th Birthday Party, a free event open to the public. The celebration will also feature the unveiling of a two-day display of the State Archives' 1664 royal grant of New Jersey by James, Duke of York. For details and a downloadable invitation, visit: <http://www.njarchives.org/links/njday.html>.

To learn more about the diverse array of services and programs offered by the Department of State, visit www.state.nj.us/state/.

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About the National Student/Parent Mock Election

The National Student/Parent Mock Election (NSPME) is the nation's oldest, largest and most successful voter-education project, dating from 1980. Since the first Mock Election in 1980, over 50 million young voters have cast their ballots and, in the process, discovered what it means to be an American citizen and the value of citizenship in our democracy. Every generation is invited to participate in the National Student/Parent Mock Election and to help "preserve and protect" our democracy. Partners for the 2008 National Student/Parent Mock Election included: USA Today, the Pearson Foundation, the National Association of Broadcasters Educational Foundation, Declare Yourself, Strong American Schools, School

Perceptions, Google, BrainPOP, the National PTA, the National School Boards Association, the National Council for the Social Studies, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Student Councils, the Council of the Great City Schools, and the National Association of Secretaries of State. Additionally, the National Student/Parent Mock Election's supporters have included the Election Assistance Commission, and the Kaplan Foundation. The collective contributions of all supporters help NSPME create a richer and more meaningful experience for students, parents and teachers. For more information, go to www.nationalmockelection.org.

About the Pearson Foundation

Pearson, the international education and information company, is Jumpstart's Read for the Record's Sponsor and Founding Partner. The Pearson Foundation extends Pearson's commitment to education by partnering with leading nonprofit, civic, and business organizations to provide financial, organizational, and publishing assistance across the globe. The Foundation aims to make a difference by sponsoring innovative educational programs and extending its educational expertise to help in classrooms and in local communities. For more information, visit www.pearsonfoundation.org.

About Declare Yourself

Declare Yourself is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit campaign to empower and encourage every eligible 18-29 year-old in America to register and vote in local and national elections. Using the power of strategic media and retail partnerships, celebrity spokespeople, and most importantly, mobile and Internet technology, Declare Yourself's campaign blankets the landscape of popular culture, as well as universities and high schools, with a simple, clear message: REGISTER and VOTE! Since 2004, Declare Yourself has registered almost 4 million young people via our on-line registration tool, on-location efforts, and Ultimate College Bowl contest, contributing significantly to the unprecedented turnout of youth voters in the 2008 Presidential Election – 24 million – a major increase from 2004. For more information, visit www.declareyourself.org