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For Immediate Release

WISCONSIN CHARTER SCHOOL AWARDS HIGHLIGHT EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION ACROSS THE STATE

Madison, WI – November 10, 2009 – The Wisconsin Charter Schools Association (WCSA) has announced the winners of annual awards in four categories, as well as three career achievement honorees:

Charter School Person of the Year:

First Place: Dennis Conta

Second Place: Jan Bontz

Third Place: Lynne Sobczak & Kristi Cole (Milwaukee Public Schools)

Distinguished Merit: Robert Rauh (Milwaukee College Prep)

Distinguished Merit: Dr. Joe Sheehan and Ted Hamm (Sheboygan Area School District)

Charter School Teacher of the Year:

First Place: Victoria Rydberg (River Crossing Environmental Charter School, Portage)

Second Place: Erin Fuller (Carmen School of Science and Technology, Milwaukee)

Third Place: Kim Johnsen (WINGS Academy, Milwaukee)

Distinguished Merit: Darlene Machtan (Northwoods Community Secondary School, Rhinelander)

Distinguished Merit: Kirby Kohler (Rhinelander Environmental Stewardship Academy)

Charter School Innovator of the Year:

First Place: Department of Public Instruction (Project Based Learning Network)

Second Place: Danny Goldberg

Third Place: Seeds of Health

Distinguished Merit: Valley New School (Appleton)

Overall Charter School of the Year: (overall winner, and 2 sub-categories within)

First Place (Platinum Award): Tenor High School (Milwaukee)

For the subcategories, one category, High Performance Charter Schools of the Year, recognizes schools that have shown truly outstanding student performance. These are schools with the highest test results compared to all public schools in the state. The other category, High Achievement Charter Schools of the Year, recognizes schools that are models for the original and creative ways they educate children that embody the Charter School spirit of school reform and innovation. These schools also show strong academic performance.

High Performance Charter Schools of the Year:

Gold Award: Lake Country Academy (Sheboygan)

Silver Award: Milwaukee College Prep (Milwaukee)

High Achievement Charter School of the Year:

Gold Award: River Crossing Environmental Charter School (Portage)

Silver Award: Alliance School (Milwaukee)

The three Career Achievement Awards went to:

Chris Uelmen, Elementary Curriculum Coordinator, Verona Area Core Knowledge Charter School:

Uelmen is one of the founders of Verona Core Knowledge Charter School, opened in 1996 and one of the earliest Charter Schools in the State. This school set the standard for excellence, innovation, and governance for the Charter Schools that followed it.

Barbara Ernest, I.D.E.A.L. (retired): 38 years ago, Ernest became a teacher in the Milwaukee Public School District, and 8 years ago she co-founded I.D.E.A.L., one of the highest performing Charter Schools. I.D.E.A.L is one of the first true public teacher cooperatives in Wisconsin and in the United States.

Dan Grego, Executive Director, Trans Center for Youth: Grego has created and operated many successful schools, including Charter Schools. He has been a leader and an activist who is associated with efforts over the years to improve Milwaukee's schools.

“The announcement of the charter school awards highlights the terrific accomplishments for the public charter schools and the people who make up the charter school community in our state,” said John Gee, Executive Director of the WCSA. “The judges had to make some very tough decisions, and the winners of our annual awards are all truly outstanding individuals, teachers, organizations, and schools. I am very proud to serve in the role that I do and to be associated with Wisconsin’s amazing charter school community, which works to benefit all students in our great state.”

Winners from all categories were selected from the more than sixty nominations submitted for consideration via a peer-nomination process; an awards selection committee made the final selections.

The WCSA's Awards Gala was held on Friday, November 6th at Turner Hall in Milwaukee. More than 400 people attended the Wisconsin Charter Schools Association (WCSA) Second Annual Charter Schools Award Gala, which recognized the state's outstanding public charter schools, teachers, and charter school supporters.

About Wisconsin Public Charter Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools that are free to be more innovative and are held accountable for improved student achievement. As of September 2009, there are more than 200 charter schools in operation in Wisconsin, serving more than 30,000 public school students.

About The Wisconsin Charter Schools Association

The Wisconsin Charter Schools Association (WCSA) is a statewide voluntary membership organization of charter public schools and friends of charter public schools. WCSA's mission is to promote unprecedented levels of student success by helping to build the capabilities of charter public schools in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Charter Schools Association, P.O. Box 1704, Madison, WI 53701, www.wicharterschools.org; 608-261-1120.

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