

**Media Advisory**

Contact:  
Howie Schaffer, Public Outreach Director  
202.628.7464 x209  
HSchaffer@PublicEducation.org

**AWARD FOR LOCAL EDUCATION FUND EXCELLENCE  
TO BE GIVEN TO THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE OF WEST VIRGINIA**

November 8, 2006 (Washington, DC) - The Education Alliance of West Virginia, has been named the 2006 winner of the Wendy D. Puriefoy Award. This annual award -- bestowed by the Public Education Network (PEN) Board of Directors -- is given to the nation's most outstanding local education fund (LEF) recognizing their distinguished contributions to create conditions of learning that benefit all children.

"The Education Alliance is a shining example of how an entire state can come together to create greater public demand for superior student outcomes and make public education their #1 public priority," said Wendy D. Puriefoy, PEN's president.

West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin praised the news, "I have a great deal of respect and appreciation for The Education Alliance and the successful work they have done in increasing public awareness and personal responsibility for public education through encouraging partnerships and collaborations."

The First Lady of West Virginia, Gayle Manchin, also an Alliance board member, expressed her pride, "One of the most valuable components of The Education Alliance is their process of using research-based information to establish strong bonds of trust and mutual understanding among diverse communities who care about public education."

The Education Alliance has awarded more than 4,000 grants to schools and teachers totaling over \$1 million to improve teaching skills, parental involvement, and school quality. They have established 2,300 business-school partnerships providing direction in choosing career pathways, facilitating realistic work site opportunities, and preparing students for postsecondary options. The Alliance has also trained more than 6,000 volunteers who have read to 100,000 students, significantly increasing literacy skills and reading comprehension.

"We have been privileged to work with outstanding business, education, community and labor partners statewide who share our goal of higher achievement for all students. It is exciting to receive this national recognition of our work." said Hazel Palmer, president/CEO of The Education Alliance.

One of the Alliance's most notable achievements has been enhancing the connection between schools and community by creating thousands of business/community mentors, curriculum advisors and role models. The Alliance has influenced state laws, statutes, and policies to implement more challenging instructional goals and better career preparation.

The Puriefoy Award was created in 2003 to honor Wendy D. Puriefoy for a lifetime of advocacy for quality public education, social justice, and increased opportunity, and decades of exemplary dedication, uncommon vision, personal sacrifice, and steadfast advocacy on behalf of America's children.

Past winners have included the Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools (2003), Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga, TN (2004) and the Mobile Area Education Foundation (2005).

For more information on the Wendy D. Puriefoy Award, visit:  
<http://www.publiceducation.org/wdpaward.asp>

The award will be given to West Virginia's local education fund during the opening host reception of Public Education Network's 16<sup>th</sup> annual conference, Sunday, November 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Homer Building Atrium, 601 13<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. (Metro Center, 13<sup>th</sup> Street exit).

The conference, *Local Education Funds: Leading Transformation in Education*, will address strengthening relationships of public schools with parents, taxpayers, and key civic, business, legislative and philanthropic partners. The conference will examine and promote proven strategies for increasing public responsibility for public education.

Keynote presenters include:

- **Madeleine Albright**, the first female U.S. Secretary of State
- **Diane Ravitch**, author, research Professor of Education at NY University, senior fellow, Brookings Institution, and senior fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University;
- **Geoffrey Canada**, named one of "America's Best Leaders" by U.S. News and World Report and an expert on issues concerning violence, children and community redevelopment.

**For a complete schedule and list of sessions, go to:  
<http://www.publiceducation.org/events.asp>**

Public Education Network (PEN) is a national association of 80 local education funds and individuals working to advance public school reform in low-income communities across the country. Our network of LEFs operates in 34 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, serving 11.5 million students— 22 percent of America's public school population—in 18,000 schools in more than 1,600 school districts in low-income areas. PEN's international affiliates serve over 7,000,000 children in Mexico, Peru and the Philippines.

PEN seeks to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for all children. PEN believes community engagement is the missing ingredient in school reform, and that the level of public involvement ultimately determines the quality of education provided by public schools.

For more information about PEN, visit <http://www.PublicEducation.org>