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First-Ever \$250,000 National Nonprofit Collaboration Prize Contest Ends in Tie Between Two Successful Mergers – YMCA & JCC of Greater Toledo Area and Dallas Museum of Nature & Science

As many nonprofits worry about their bottom lines, new award designed by The Lodestar Foundation encourages collaboration as “more than a survival strategy”

March 5, 2009, Scottsdale, AZ – Today, the Phoenix-based Lodestar Foundation and Arizona-Indiana-Michigan (AIM) Alliance presented a \$250,000 national award as the first-ever Collaboration Prize to two groups – the Museum of Nature & Science in Dallas, Texas and the YMCA & JCC of Greater Toledo – at a luncheon ceremony in Scottsdale, AZ. Originally intended as a \$250,000 award to one winner, the contest resulted in a tie, with each winner taking home \$125,000.

“On the micro level, The Collaboration Prize is of great importance to the Museum as we seek support to advance our vision,” said Nicole G. Small, Chief Executive Officer of the Museum of Nature & Science, a merger of three Dallas museums. “On the macro level, The Prize will have a substantial impact on thousands of organizations by providing models and best practices for our industry where few exist.”

Lodestar launched the competition last year in an effort to demonstrate how nonprofit resources can be used more effectively to create greater impact. Collaborations and mergers in the nonprofit world have become a frequent topic of conversation since the ailing economy began dominating headlines.

“Financial crises and pressure from funders certainly come into play from time to time, but the Prize generated an overwhelming response that demonstrated how non-profit organizations deploy the entrepreneurial spirit not only in starting new organizations and new programs, but also by reinventing and renewing their work through collaboration,” said Sterling Speirn, CEO of WK Kellogg Foundation and lead Prize judge. “I am so impressed with the work of all of the applicants.”

The 2009 Collaboration Prize was presented to the YMCA & JCC of Greater Toledo and the Museum of Nature & Science in Dallas because of their ability to successfully merge

and leverage resources, and serve as models for others in the nonprofit sector. They were chosen from among a pool of over 644 U.S.-based nominations.

“The leadership of the YMCA and the JCC take great pride in this unique affiliation model which is one-of-a-kind in our nation,” said Robert Alexander, YMCA of Greater Toledo President and CEO. “The reason for its success has to do with the strong, trusting relationships that exist between people of the Jewish and Christian faiths in our area.”

In addition to presenting the \$250,000 prize, Lodestar and the AIM Alliance are compiling the wealth of information they gathered from nominees into an information base of effective collaboration models that can be studied and used by nonprofit leaders, grantmakers and academics to advance their work.

Today’s announcement comes at a time when many nonprofits are desperately seeking ways to remain viable in an increasingly harsh fundraising environment. Nonprofit professionals reported the lowest overall level of confidence in the fundraising climate for U.S. charities in over a decade, according to the latest Philanthropic Giving Index (PGI) report released in December by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. What’s more, a recent survey by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* found that many of the nation’s largest grantmakers suffered a median 28% drop in assets. These economic pressures have forced many nonprofits across the country to eliminate positions, cut salaries and downsize operations.

"People tend to associate collaborations and mergers with the business world and not nonprofits. But the truth is that these strategies are no less important in the nonprofit world - especially at a time when everyone is looking at how to make their dollars go farther," said Craig Newmark, Founder of craigslist and member of The Collaboration Prize’s Final Selection Panel.

“Our Collaboration Prize findings could not have come at a better time,” said Lodestar President Lois Savage. “We hope that the models and best practices we identified will help many a nonprofit to weather this storm.”

As part of the Awards Ceremony, all eight finalists provided highlights about what made their collaborations so successful. A list of the 120 quarter finalists will be posted on the Collaboration Prize Web site on March 9 and a video from the award luncheon will be posted online on April 1.

To set up interviews with Lodestar, the AIM Alliance or contest judges and prize recipients, contact Yasmin Hamidi at yhamidi@fenton.com or (212) 584-5000 x 227. For more information on The Collaboration Prize, visit www.thecollaborationprize.org.

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The Lodestar Foundation is a grantmaking organization devoted to maximizing the growth and impact of philanthropy by efficiently and effectively leveraging philanthropic resources. Based in Phoenix, Arizona, the Foundation provides funds nationally and internationally to organizations that support its mission. The Lodestar Foundation was

*established in 1999 as a support foundation of the Arizona Community Foundation.
Please visit www.lodestarfoundation.org for more information.*

***The Arizona-Indiana-Michigan (AIM) Alliance** is a collaboration composed of The Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation at Arizona State University, the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, and the Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University (Michigan). The work of the AIM Alliance started in 2003 and is dedicated to furthering the sector by improving nonprofit management practice, generating and sharing scholarly and practical knowledge, increasing communication and collaborating on research.*