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Cool Culture Celebrators *Catch the Magic*, Honor Family Foundation

(New York, NY, May 19, 2009) –On Thursday, May 14th, Cool Culture held its annual Spring Gala at the South Street Seaport Atrium. The evening brought together Cool Culture families, educators from partner early education programs, and Cool Culture supporters, to pay tribute to the work of the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, the evening’s honoree. Guests also celebrated the impact of Cool Culture’s innovative art education and art access programs for low-income children and families.

“Cool Culture recognizes The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation for their commitment to empowering communities through arts access and social justice – a deeply held value that Cool Culture shares with the Foundation,” stated Gail Velez, Cool Culture’s co-founder. Shelley and Donald Rubin, who established the foundation in 1995, also founded the Rubin Museum of Art in 2004. The museum offers free admission to hundreds of Cool Culture families each year, providing low-income children with exposure to the museum’s renown collection of Tibetan and Himalayan art. The award, accepted by Bruce Payne, Executive Director of the Foundation, highlights the importance of the foundation’s mission to empower communities and to aid institutions that seek to improve the fabric of the societies in which they live.

The evening’s program included Cool Culture family members Halie Onikura, 5 and his father Shannon Davis, who described the learning opportunities and family bonding they experienced on trips to places like the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, and Lefferts Historic House. The evening also featured the National Jazz Museum in Harlem’s All Stars jazz quartet, and a silent auction that showcased artwork created and donated by Cool Culture children.

“Cool Culture is so pleased that The National Jazz Museum in Harlem has joined the roster of 80 cultural institutions that have committed to providing access to New Yorkers of limited means,” said Edwina Meyers, co-founder of Cool Culture, “We encourage all New Yorkers to join us in supporting families and to ‘catch the magic’ of Cool Culture, by joining our crusade to get families involved in their children’s education through the arts.”

Founded in 1999, Cool Culture helps lower income families to access and enjoy NYC’s cultural life in order to provide educational experiences for their children and to strengthen parents’ capacity to serve as their child’s first educator.

In order to overcome the financial, informational, and perceptual obstacles that prevent them from taking advantage of the educational resources provided by NYC’s cultural institutions, Cool Culture’s **Family Pass** program entitles families with children in targeted schools to unlimited free visitation to 81 of NYC’s finest cultural institutions.

Cool Culture accomplishes this goal by linking NYC’s cultural institutions with early childhood educational programs – child care, Head Start, Universal Pre-Kindergarten, and Title I public schools – that provide subsidized education and care to children and families in low-income households.

Cool Culture’s programs currently serve 50,000 families enrolled in 450 early childhood education programs throughout the five boroughs, annually; and it has developed partnerships with 80 of the City’s best-known cultural institutions, including the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Central Park Zoo, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Morris-Jumel Mansion, El Museo del Barrio, the Museum of Modern Art, the Noguchi Museum, and the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Research shows that family involvement in learning is a predictor of a child’s academic achievement. The subsequent achievement gap between middle-class children and those living in poverty begins before children enter preschool. Cool Culture, in partnership with its innovating educators and cultural institutions, helps parents to fill this gap.

In 2006, Cool Culture was inducted into the Channel Thirteen / WNET and WLIW21 Community Hall of Fame. In 2008, Cool Culture is the recipient of the Union Square Arts Award.

For more information about Cool Culture and the 2009 Spring Benefit, please contact Candice Anderson at 718.230.4186 x302 or visit www.coolculture.org. # # #