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Underserved Kids Given Keys to City's Educational Riches During Economic Downturn

(New York, NY, March 27, 2009) – Responding to increasing hardships faced by the youngest New Yorkers as the economic downturn kicks into full gear, Cool Culture funnels support from among its funders and partners to low-income families. On Thursday, March 26, 2009, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., **Cool Culture held its 7th Annual Culture Fair, All Hands on Deck: Crafting the Teachable Moment**, at the South Street Seaport Museum. This year's Cool Culture Fair brought parents and educators together with cultural institutions to explore how to create teachable moments for young children while on cultural outings and during everyday routines.

Every day more than 50,000 Cool Culture parents whose children are enrolled in subsidized education programs have access to free, unlimited admission to 80 of NYC's best known museums, botanic gardens and zoos. Cool Culture's innovative programming helps parents to support their children's language and cognitive development by assisting them to leverage top-notch educational programs available in cultural institutions throughout the five boroughs.

"Even during the best economic times, low-income families have little disposable income left after paying for everyday necessities. As New Yorker's increasingly feel the effects of the recession, Cool Culture is an important resource for connecting low-income children and families to free, educational resources that help parents prepare their children for school, and to enjoy the quality family time together that is so important during trying times." said Cool Culture Executive Director, Candice Anderson.

More than 50 of NYC's world renown cultural institutions were be represented and eight different panel sessions will focus on this year's Cool Culture Fair' theme which will be led by some of NYC's premiere museum educators, artists and directors. Panel presenters include: Cathleen Wiggins, Professor & Director, Leadership in the Arts Program, Bank Street College of Education; Nelly Silagy Benedek, Director of Education, Jewish Museum; and Rocio Galarza, Director of Content Design and Outreach, Sesame Street Workshop.

Founded in 1999, Cool Culture helps families in low-income households to overcome the barriers of cost, lack of information and perception that cultural institutions are "not for us," that prevent them from taking advantage of the educational resources provided by NYC's cultural institutions.

Cool Culture's **Family Pass** program provides families with children in targeted schools to unlimited free visitation to 80 of NYC's finest cultural institutions. Cool Culture's **400+ partner educators** market arts-based learning to families in their child care, Head Start, Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs and Title I schools. Cool Culture's **Family Time** quarterly publication is distributed to 50,000 participating families and is available in English, Spanish and Chinese.

Last year, families made more than 97,000 visits to Cool Culture's 80 partner cultural institutions which include: the Asian American Arts Centre, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Bronx Museum, the Central Park Zoo, the Children's Museum of Manhattan, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Morris-Jumel Mansion, El Museo del Barrio, the Museum of Modern Art, the Queens Museum of Art, the Noguchi Museum, the Solomon R. Guggenheim 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 7th Annual Cool Culture Fair, please contact Lindsay Booker at 718.230.4186 x305 lbooker@cool-culture.org or visit www.cool-culture.org.

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