



For more information, contact:
Claudia Morlan, 713-524-0661, or
Carrie Pillsbury, 713-296-6776

Fund for Teachers Announces Los Angeles' Plank Fellowship Award Winner

National non-profit also names 2009 Fellows to Travel This Summer

May 5 – (Los Angeles) Celebrating America's top teachers on National Teacher Day, Fund for Teachers today named Robert Jeffers, teacher at Susan Miller Dorsey High School, Los Angeles' Plank Fellowship Award winner.

Named for Fund for Teachers' Founder Raymond Plank, the Plank Fellowship Award is given annually to the teacher who made the most of their summer odyssey (which he/she designed and Fund for Teachers made possible) upon returning to the classroom.

Last summer, Robert traveled the country, documenting through film interviews, tours, and visits to schools, the emergence of an important form of urban greenspace – the garden. Traveling from New York to Seattle to New Orleans, Robert filmed the distinct geographies, cultures and histories that shaped the landscapes of these divergent locations and documented the similarities among the citizens developing greenspaces to feed, educate and spiritually soothe their communities. Back home in the fall, students enrolled in Robert's film production course, and profiled community and school gardens in Los Angeles and the people and organizations promoting them. Students in the film class then spent the rest of the year in the film assembly stage, editing the footage into a documentary compelling to a range of audiences. The film will be shown at a film festival in June.

"In its most essential form, my fellowship gave me a window into the amazing benefits and importance of school and community gardens in urban centers across our country," said Jeffers. "My Fund for Teachers experience reminded me that individuals from diverse backgrounds, of amazing generosity, and with a willingness to work hard are behind all of these gardens, making these greenspaces available to many, improving the neighborhoods where they are located and, ultimately, benefiting the entire community."

Fund for Teachers named Corey Pickering, Millennium High School in Manhattan, its national Plank Fellowship Award winner. Additional winners from the nonprofit's partner programs include: Kathy Clunis, Boston; Trey Thames, Houston; Cindy Coughlin and Sandra Collins, Expeditionary Learning Schools; Ziomara Perez and Megan Whitney, Chicago; Melody Afill and Donna McChesney, Oklahoma; Donna McSweeney and Lynn Talamini, Rural School and Community Trust; Erin Goodling, San Francisco; and Julie Anderson, Oakland.

Fund for Teachers also announced today its list of 2009 grant recipients. Descriptions of the new Fellows' upcoming odysseys, as well as how the Plank Fellowship Award winners implemented their 2008 fellowships, are available at <http://www.fundforteachers.org/press.html>.

Made possible by individual and corporate donors, Fund for Teachers has awarded more than \$12 million in grants to approximately 3,500 of America's top educators over the past nine years. Based in Houston, Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of America's top teachers as they identify and pursue opportunities around the world that will have the greatest impact on themselves, their students and their communities. For more information on how you can make teachers' dreams a reality, visit www.fundforteachers.org.

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