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Fund for Teachers Announces Oakland's Plank Fellowship Award Winner

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

May 4 – (Oakland) Celebrating America's top teachers on National Teacher Day, Fund for Teachers today named Julie Anderson, teacher at The College Preparatory School, Oakland's 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, Julie and several of her students and colleagues traveled to sub-Saharan Africa to learn from local communities through volunteer work. While in Gaborone, Botswana, she and her students helped a local businessman establish a bicycle shop to promote more environmentally sustainable and widely-accessible transportation. Prior to the trip, Julie and her school collected bicycles in conjunction with a local bike shop, which shipped all of the bicycles to Botswana to assist in the entrepreneurial venture. The second leg of her trip took Julie to the Moremi Reserve in the Okavango Delta to study the fragile eco-system and how the local community is preserving it.

Back home in Oakland, Julie added readings by a Nigerian female writer, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Tales of Freedom* by Ben Okri to her curriculum; created a new upper-level seminar inspired by her trip that centers around international literature (particularly African); revised the ninth grade curriculum to include a book about African slaves in the Caribbean called *The Kingdom of This World*; and plans to focus her 2009-10 seminar class around freedom and the ways writers in different countries use literature to express the desire for both political and individual liberty. Additionally, inspired by her Fund for Teachers experience, Julie and another Fund for Teachers Fellow recently took a group of students to an Eco Lodge in the cloud forests of Ecuador to once again volunteer and study the region's eco-systems.

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“My Fund for Teachers fellowship empowered me to expand my vision of myself as a teacher both inside and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, the trip helped transform my curriculum and reinforced my commitment to teaching books from around the world. Outside the classroom, I’ve come to understand my role as a teacher much more broadly.”

“Since her trip to Botswana last summer, Julie has made global education a touchstone of her literature teaching,” said Kate Kordich, colleague and English department chair. “Julie certainly was moved by her time in Africa, but more importantly, that time imprinted itself on her teaching practice and philosophy. As her department chair, I very much appreciate the intellectual knowledge she brought back from her time in Africa. As a colleague and fellow community member, I am excited about and inspired by the effective teaching opportunity Julie made happen here.”

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 Robert Jeffers, Los Angeles.

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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